



하 룬 관

H A R O O N

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ROK GAME FANTASY STORY

ROK
MEDIA

EDICION

Haroon

– 하룬 –

- Volume 2 -

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[Channy_]

Chapter 1

The Graduation Day

The long-awaited graduation day has finally come. The trainees were called up after the morning march. They aligned in their position with haste, forming perfect lines in rows and columns.

“Everyone, you went through a lot but you did really well! We trainers were glad to see huge improvements in your physical ability, and you have proved that your training was not meaningless.”

Schultz gently gazed upon the trainees.

“Today, the Talent show will be held to see the result of your training. Take this opportunity to show the guests your capabilities, and this would be the time that you will be able to check how much you have improved compared to yourselves 3 months ago.

They were annoyed by being called up right after the training without being allowed to have some rest until Schultz has mentioned about the talent show. The faces hearing Schultz’s word was bright.

Talking about the training, there were no trainees getting exhausted in 10 laps of running anymore. Also, there was no dropout in this term. There used to be about 10 dropouts in every term. Most of them were from the magicians. But the trainees of this term didn’t even dare to drop the course because of one trainee, Haroon. The magicians who tend to have negative thoughts on their physical ability were heavily motivated by Haroon who showed most superb will, and it ultimately led to an achievement of no dropouts.

Now, the only schedule left for them was the talent show, where trainees get a chance to show the fruit of their efforts and sweat. The weak trainees chosen to perform on the talent show were able to show the confidence they gained along with the physical ability, and it will provide a solid base of their mercenary life awaiting them.

“You have shown most astonishing work in the history of this course, and this academy. Not only how you took the course, but the result of it had great difference compared to the trainees before. The training department assessed your attitude and will as the best. Saying that, rather than how we used to choose among the top trainees, we decided to put every one of you on the stage in the talent show”

Thundering applause and roaring cheer filled the training ground. Everyone was able to receive the extra reward on their effort and sweat of the course. The talent show of this term would be the celebrating party that everybody can join, rather than it being a party only for the few selective ones.

“Return to your room for now, and change your clothes. After the meal, gather at the square. Many visitors will welcome you in the square in front of the Academy. Who knows, you might meet your true love today, so be clean and neat as possible.”

The trainees couldn't resist the laughter intended by the joke, at least not in this cheerful mood. With a habitual haste, they exited the training ground.

“Hey, Haroon.”

Haroon turned at the direction the voice came from. Some trainees were waiting for him, and among them, it was Sevona who stopped him. For some reason, the Quad Wankers were not there.

“You must be nervous. Aren't you?” Said one of Sevona's follower.

Haroon didn't even bother to answer that. He had no reason to be nervous anymore, as he was prepared. It was the another follower answering that instead of him.

“Hoho, Can't you see him shaking even if he pretends not to be? Why are you asking him something so obvious? Don't you know how everything will be revealed and the one who recommended him will be kicked out of the mercenary world? Do you really think he can think clearly enough to answer you?”

Haroon felt no more need in answering nor listening to their conversation. The 'threatening' they've made with the Quad Wankers continuously pressured his mind like a big boulder, and being reminded of it made him upset for a moment. He was able to clear the mind just by gently shutting his eyes and opening it again.

“Hohoho, I will show you what is the result of cheating on the others.”

“We don’t have much time left who is behind this cheater. Hahaha, I can’t wait to see who it is.”

If Haroon wasn’t in this term, they would have been enemies to each other. But as everybody knew Haroon was the top trainee, they mocked and kept humiliating Haroon with jealousy. It seemed they are quite upset for missing the title of the top trainee.

“Well, see how it goes.”

With carefree emotion, Haroon stared at them for a moment and continued his way.

“It won’t be long until the talent show. If anything goes wrong, you always have your fireball, you know.”

Galli patted his shoulder.

“Galli is right. I will help you too. They just hadn’t burned their fingers yet. I mean, yes we are same equal trainees ‘here’. Once we get to the outside of this academy, we are THE magicians. They probably know this clearly, and they’ve mocked on you, the representative magician of us.”

“Mmmhm, I really wanted them to taste my magic too.”

“Yeah, Let’s wreck ‘em.”

Including Moogles, his magician friends cheered him up. Haroon smiled back feeling their warm hearts.

For the ordinary people, it isn’t easy to see a complete stranger as their friend or a companion. But every single one of the magicians had a common thing without an exception. It was how they fall love with their magic or their studies. It wasn’t exactly same, but Haroon had a similar point too. It was how he easily concentrates on the training, so much that he could become a deaf to what others say.

In magician society, the rivals compete with each other, but once one thinks another one is better than one, magicians will change their mindset and will respect the other with all their heart. Like this, magicians had special and interesting relationships.

The magicians didn’t know how great Haroon’s magic was, but seeing how great

Haroon is on the strength, swordsmanship and throwing knives, they chose Haroon as their pride. Haroon couldn't stop smiling because of the warmth coming from their hands holding Haroon. It was the first time Haroon actually felt closeness in his personal relationships. Until now, Haroon has been busy with his training, so he didn't have enough time to care the others. But seeing how they care him, he was overwhelmed with happiness and it shed tears on Haroon's eyes.

"Let's go for now. We can show what real fire is later on too. But for now, we need to take shower. Who knows, our boss may have brought an Amy. Well, Should I shave? or should I just trim a bit?"

"Haha, you don't have to. You look good, Galli"

Haroon and Galli went back to their room, walking shoulder to shoulder.

On their way, they happened to see Nemion and some other magicians ignoring them. Their face went dark. Haroon was hurt by Nemion's complete change of her way how she treats him. It seemed that Nemion is completely disappointed about Haroon keeping his secret, and moreover, she seemed that she decided not to believe Haroon is a magician. Did she feel betrayed by him keeping the secret? There was no way to find it out anymore.

'Nemion, but you still had to trust me. If you thought I was your friend...'

Haroon headed to his room, with a bitter emotion.



After changing his cloth to cleaner training clothes, he headed to the square. As he arrives, he saw how the tables and chairs are prepared and positioned in a semi-circle shape. There were so many people gathered. They were mostly high ranks of the mercenary groups or guilds.

It felt like Haroon wasn't supposed to be there, and felt nervous about being in that kind of place for the first time. With a deep breath, he cleared his mind. But it boiled once again when he found Elser. It's been 3 months and her face was somewhat worn.

'Has she been sick?'

Their eyes had not met yet, but she seemed she was looking for him. Her eyes were

smiling but her face wasn't. She seemed pale too, she must have been sick.

In fact, Elser heard in prior that Haroon was selected to be a top trainee, so she was worried about the expected commotion of reveal that Haroon is not a magician. But as soon as she found Haroon, she smiled brightly and waved, calling him, almost shouting.

There probably was many people know her. From her action without any hesitation, Haroon knew she really cared for him. Everyone else gently sitting on the table was looking at her. Her action was so wild and her voice was so loud. Haroon knew that she will keep shouting if he didn't wave back, so Haroon did, with a giant smile.

"Wait, do you know Silver-haired Witch?"

A magician she didn't know the name of asked him. He seemed to know her.

"Yes, she is my friend. We are very close."

The people around him sensed the closeness in his voice.

"Really?"

It didn't take long until the atmosphere went down and everyone went silent. Haroon felt it strange, but he didn't know why. Even until then, he didn't know how famous Elser was.

"Well, seeing how he trained, she could be his friend..."

Somebody grumbled with a low voice, and everyone nodded.

Elser, the Silver-haired Witch!

She has made quite a name even from her young age, killing so many monsters and defeating a lot of thieves. But she was also famous for being hot tempered and not fearing to fight with mercenary guilds, alone. To be her friend, one will need quite spirit and ability. And Haroon's ability was somewhat close to that.

It didn't take a long time for the rumor to reach Sevona, Nemion, the Quad Wankers and other few trainees, and it made their face pale.

“Se, Sevona, did you hear that? He is a friend of the Silver-haired Witch.”

The members of the Quad Wankers, who became allies because of their common enemy, Haroon, their body shook like a branch facing a blizzard.

“Then wouldn’t it be that old man, her father who recommended Haroon? What if he finds out we’ve been making conspiracy and scandal of hi...”

“Cut the nonsense! It was YOU who said it. It was YOU who said you were sure that Haroon has joined the course by cheating. If it turns out to be your lie or you trying to set him up, don’t expect me to be on your side,” Sevona sharply said.

Sevona bit her lips, staring the Quad Wankers. She bit it so hard, that it went white. She’s been thinking that the Quad Wanker’s words were right because Haroon couldn’t, no, hasn’t been answering her. And now, there is a possibility that Haroon is that the person they talk of.

‘Haroon, a friend of Elser? The Elser?’

Elser once has completely destroyed a small mercenary guild, all alone. The reason was that the guild has been making rumors about her words. On that day, that mercenary guild that had 32 members was disbanded. 10 of them were advanced class mercenaries. No one went out the guild without getting injured.

Even in the metropolis, she dared to handgrip the Silver Wing Knights, one of the imperial knights. It was because they mocked on her face, and she broke arms and legs of 4 knights and 12 knight-apprentices right on the site she was mocked. The Knights couldn’t do anything officially since they were beaten up by one female mercenary.

But that wasn’t the end. Elser was enraged to see a bunch of knights have shadowed her, and invaded the headquarter of the Silver Wing Knights and had a sword fight with the vice president of the Knights. The result of the battle wasn’t revealed, but there was a rumor saying that she has defeated over 10 knights.

This rumor has raised a commotion in the metropolis. Because of her, an Imperial committee was held, and they conducted an inspection of the entire knights positioned in the Metropolis. Those knights who mocked on female citizens, and those who made fun on the citizens’ appearance was dismissed reasoning their violation of the code of chivalry, and high ranking officers defended for them was dismissed for

the same reason. Only after then, the commotion was calmed down.

The official level of Elser, who hasn't reached an age of 20 yet, was Advanced Sword Expert. Hot tempered, but trustworthy and loyal Elser has accepted Haroon as a friend. That made Sevona and other trainees who found Haroon suspicious to think of many things. Sevona finally realized that Haroon may haven't been lying at all.

'Come to think of it, he couldn't have been lying since he kept his silence all the time. Then, was it really the oath of mana that he wasn't able to say anything at all?' Sevona thought.

She was chilled. She could have been making Elser as her enemy. She was making a position in the mercenary world just by herself, without any his fathers help. If Haroon really is a magician, then what she has been doing was only jealousy of missing the title of Top Trainee.

Nothing was revealed yet, but her face turned red already because of the embarrassment and shame on herself.

This was same to Nemion. She was also a young, female rising star in the Mercenary world, so she had some acquaintance with Elser. She knew very well who Elser is. But that wasn't entirely why she was blaming herself. It was because she felt terrible that she didn't trust Haroon, even he said he has sworn an oath of mana. She only could think that in the deep part of her mind, she was feeling jealous of him.

But that wasn't entirely why she was blaming herself. It was because she felt terrible that she didn't trust Haroon, even he said he has sworn an oath of mana. She only could think that in the deep part of her mind, she was feeling jealous of him.

He can't make this much improvement if he is really a magician. That was the reason why she and other trainees couldn't trust Haroon. But was it really the logic they had? Couldn't it from their childish conceit that no other magicians can be better than them? What she only could do is lower her head and leaving a deep sigh.

Meanwhile, the graduation ceremony was heading its end quite swiftly. As if the ceremony was reflecting the personality of mercenaries who don't like empty formalities and vanities, the simple speeches were done in short time, and the talent show everyone waited for was the only schedule in order.

The host, Trainer Schultz's loud voice was stimulating the trainees' passion.

"The people standing right front of us are the trainees who just have completed their basic training course in last three month. There was no one like them who had shown the best will to train, sincerity and the performance in the history of our academy. Please, give these young mercenaries a big hand."

So the audience made a loud applause that could be heard in any place in the metropolis.

"The time has come, the time that the trainees can show you their talent, or their result of taking the course. Their level is still low, and they are young, but I don't think there would be anyone consider these youth worthless. These trainees here are the rising stars of the mercenaries, so please, show them a lot of encouragements."

The trainees went up on the stage in their order and introduced themselves their recommender and the group they belong. And then they started performing their talents to the audience, alone or in groups or two or three. It was the non-magician mercenaries who started performing first on the show. As the trainees of building B and C didn't have any special abilities like the magicians, they showed their swordsmanship or throwing knife skills that they learned from the course. Since what they performed was so low level, it wasn't something the mercenaries would enjoy, but they gave the performer a big hand of encouragement. They knew that it's only the efforts that count, not the result.

Some trainees' act did attract peoples eyes. Most of them were the ones who had or have a hostile expression to Haroon. They were the trainees that their group had expectations on them. They showed the audience what they've been practicing since their young age, and gained a look and applause of expectations.

Sevona showed a terrific throwing knife show. Because of her father's will, she wasn't able to be a combat mercenary. But even at her young age, she showed an outstanding work handling various office work that she was able to contribute managing the guild.

Her talent was known to be a swordsmanship, but she unexpectedly chose to show her throwing knife skills, and her performance was astonishing. She threw her knives 30 steps away from the target, and she hit all 10 targets. This was almost like a superhuman skill, and this made every audience to jump up out of their sit in surprise. The rumor, saying that some trainees saw an aura in her throwing knives, was right.

Throwing knives or daggers was only effective for the targets in range of 20 steps. It is because the weapon itself is too light, but she used an aura to increase the range and hit the target. The guests couldn't close their mouth. It was amazing to see her using aura at her age of 20.

A trainee named Libora's act was a tightrope performance, walking on the tightrope held high up above one's height without any tools, just a folding fan. She even jumped on it, and it draws exclamations of applause from the audience.

The Magicians' turn came.

The highlight was on Galli who was the oldest among the trainees. Galli was from Rusoul Mercenary Guild, a famous guild of the northern part of an empire. He was one step away from mastering 2 circle magic, and he was specialized in combat magic. For 3 months, he wasn't able to train his magic as he was busy training his body and sword. Despiting that, he performed a powerful Fire Wave, which meant he became a beginner of 3 circle.

But that wasn't the end. Most of the magicians showed that they have surpassed their level, and it was a satisfying result to themselves, and to the groups they belong. They showed the audience why the magicians need to take the course; to break the wall they face, they need an experience they never had before.

And finally, it was Haroon's turn.

"And last but not least, this is our Top Trainee. This is the trainee that every trainer gave the highest score. He joined as a work trainee and earned this title by giving effort several times more than the others. Please, give him a big applause.

As if he made his name without knowing, the square went silent after a short, but loud applause. The audience eyes were fixed on him. Everyone knew that he passed the course with an outstanding score as a magician, so they were interested which group he belonged, and who recommended him.

"The name is Haroon. I do not belong to any group yet, and the recommender is..."

Haroon paused there. He couldn't continue. He wasn't sure if he can reveal that the recommender is Elser. He didn't want any harm to her so he couldn't help but to

hesitate.

“I recommended him. A friend of my daughter and a magician who Mckin admits.”

A man who was sitting in the middle table stood up. His word broke the silence, and the audience went noisy. It was because the recommender was the man out of their list. So the man cringed his face and shouted at the audience.

“What, is there any objection I, Piel’s recommendation?”

And that made the audience silent once again. Who would ever dare to object the Brave of the Black, Piel? He was born mercenary, and he was one of the 12 senates of the Headquarter of Mercenary Guilds of Teronn Empire. He was a living legend, well known as the only human came out alive from the Black Forest, the forest of devilish monsters.

A few trainees, including Sevona and Nemion, went pale. There was no reason that Haroon couldn’t be a magician if he was recommended by Piel.

“Huh-huh-huh! Would there be, sir? They are just surprised to hear that you have found a talented one and recommended him yourself.”

“Hum, Hmm!”

Piel made his face bright again hearing Nike’s word, the president of HQ. But in his mind, his face was getting dark as the time goes. He heard the truth from Elser and McKin, and he still participated the ceremony, daring to buy all the disgrace instead of Elser.

‘For my damned daughter’s sake, I’m finally getting humiliated. Damn it! Once the ceremony is done, I’m going to kill him first. How dare you seduce my little girl with that good face and body? How dare you!’ he thought.

Haroon was standing there surprised by Piel’s claim and shivered seeing Piel’s murderous stare that he didn’t know the reason for. He knew something went wrong, but he didn’t know why and it made him uncomfortable.

‘So is he Elser’s Father? But why is he staring at me like he is going to kill me?’

But it wasn’t time for that. Everyone was watching him with interest, curiosity,

expectations. But not everyone was watching him with good intention. He could feel someone was watching him with a hostile expression, like jealousy or curses.

'Alright, then I will show you a true display of skills. This is what I got with Elser's help. Elser, take a good look!'

"So he really was a magician? We certainly checked his mana after he took the cuffs off, and it wasn't enough to be a magician," grumbled Nemion.

Her legs were already trembling. She saw a person wrongly. She used to say she could see one's mind clearly using a spirit's ability.

"What I'm going to show you is a throwing knife act, not a magic act. What you are going to see is something I learned to do. It isn't much to show, but please enjoy."

Noise aroused among the audience. All other magicians showed their magic. Everyone thought a question in their mind. 'Is he thinking his throwing knives are better than his magic?'

The trainers serving as a stage crew set up a target dummy 30 steps away from Haroon, and 7 more dummies, setting them on in every 5 steps. They set them in line, so in Haroon's perspective, he would only be able to see the front dummy.

"Gosh! How is he supposed to hit that with his throwing knife?"

The furthest dummy was 65 steps away¹. That wasn't easy to reach even with a bow and an arrow, much less with a throwing knife, which is very light and is thrown with a bare hand. On top of that, he couldn't see the targets except for the first one. Nobody could guess what he was going to do.

"Isn't he just driven by his youthful bravery?"

"If he throws while moving, yes he will be able to but the last one isn't even clear to see."

The audience some when all stood up and started talking about their guesses. For their eyes, it just seemed Haroon selected impossible challenge to perform.

The distance of 65 steps were not even easy for the skilled archers. There was no possibility that the throwing knives would reach the target that far. Sevona was able to

reach the target because she used aura, but Haroon was a magician. Everyone thought he was just trying to be heroic.

In fact, Haroon knew it was impossible for him to hit the target that far. But those worries never come to Haroon's ears, as he was already focusing on the throwing knives hold in his belt and the target. If he uses the power of elemental spirit, he certainly could. That's why he trained for last few days and nights, being poisoned for few tenth of times.

With the audience's attention, Haroon stood in front of the dummies. With an aslant posture, he took a knife and held it with his right hands, and he readied his left hand to throw the next one.

"Brat, come out."

With a low voice that nobody else could hear, he summoned Brat. Brat appeared and sat on his shoulder. Of course, no one else could see it. But there unexpectedly many magicians who felt some kind of unfamiliar mana has moved around him. They were high-ranking magicians who came as the guests. A buzz of excitement ran through them.

"I can sense the mana current!"

"What is it? It doesn't seem to be a magic."

Haroon didn't care about those noises. It was time for him to focus, which is one of the best things he can do.

"Huhu, is it finally the show time? Alright, alright, I will fill what you lack and make the audience crazy.

Yes, his talking was still very bitch, but Brat knew what Haroon was going to do. The given time was short, and his affinity was still low, so the last rehearsal went fail too. But Brat knew Haroon. Brat knew very well that he will make it for this time with his concentration and his will. Considering how he has such a low mana and Elemental force, Brat admitted his persistence and concentration.

"By the pact of the string connecting the two worlds, I summon you, Sylph."

"Huhuhu, I knew you were planning a scam. You master are so evil."

As Haroon's clear voice echo down the square, Brat cast 8 small whirl winds. Even the spirit hasn't revealed its appearance, the audience still could find out that Sylph, the spirit of wind was in presence. Even in Nemion's act, they couldn't see the sylph. This presentation has led such a reaction.

"It's the spirits!

"He was an Elementalist!"

"Oh gosh, An elemental magic?"

The crowd went crazy because nobody couldn't even think that he is an Elementalist. Normally, spirits don't reveal themselves unless the Elementalist make them do so. So people couldn't ever know it was Brat making 8 whirl winds moving 8 times. After all, Elementalists are not easy to find, like Nemion is.

"There is ei, eight of them! But how...?"

Nemion couldn't close her mouth seeing Haroon summoning 8 sylphs when she barely summons 2 of them.

Brat stopped making whirl wind and stuck on the throwing knife. Creditably, It even didn't forget to make the knife shake a bit, to make the audience to think that a sylph has stuck on it.

"Here we go!"

The knife Haroon threw flew up and down like a fish swimming in the ocean and headed to the first target. Haroon took another knife and threw at the second target and Brat guided it. His hands threw knives with a perfect interval. The third, and the fourth... And the last one left his hand.

"Huhu. Believe me, Master. It will be amazing."

"Good work."

"Since now you know how good I am, mind your way of talking and your attitude. Then I will make you a great person."

Haroon punched in its face.

"Stop chattering and go back to your place."

Haroon dissummon it and quickly took an antidote. It would seem strange if they saw him doing that in front of him, but nobody gave attention to his actions since they were seeing his back.

The first one he threw flew slowly, almost drawing a semi circle, and the last one was very fast, almost flying horizontally. Every knife had different speed and a different trajectory. Of course, it was all by Brat's ability, trained by verbal and physical abuse of Haroon.

But in audience perspective, seeing all 8 throwing knives flying at the target was so unreal. The trainers', trainees', and the guests' eyes couldn't be any wider, and their mouth didn't seem to close in the near future. They were speechless to see the throwing knives, which was a non-living object, was swimming in the air like living fishes.

But there was only one sound. Only one hit, they thought. The fantastic throwing knife skill is worthy of praise, but it was no use if it doesn't hit the target. This drew heavy groans of the crowd.

"It is sad to see only the front dummy was hit.

"Even though it was an overdo, it was awesome to see throwing knife skills with spirit's ability applied."

When the crowd was talking in a whisper, there was a UI sound going on in Haroon's ears.

- You have learned new skill 'Spirit-guided throwing knives'
- E.S.P. is increased by 1 point
- E.F.P. is increased by 30

It was at that moment when the trainers ran at the each dummy and started carrying them. There was 7 of them moving at the same time. They set the target dummies in rows so the audience could see it clearly. Then the thundering applause roared up.

"That's awesome!"

"He is great!"

Somebody even whistled.

There were 8 knives stuck in the dummies, one in each. All 8 knives hit the different vital spots. Even though they were not at the bull's-eyes, it didn't hit the outside of circle indicating the vital spots. One short sound meant only one thing; that all 8 knives hit the dummies at the same time. Therefore, it meant Haroon has controlled the speed of the knives using Sylph's power to make it hit the targets at the same time.

That was never tried by anyone at any time. It wouldn't be much to say that Haroon has reached the highest stage of throwing knives. No Elementalists were known for throwing knives using their spirits' power. It was Haroon, who thought out of the frame and showed the application of elemental magic.

It was Mercenaries' tradition to use throwing knives as a signal of a sudden attack or a hidden card to rescue themselves in an emergency situation, and mercenary Elementalists were no exception. To them, Haroon has shown a new world. Unlike the trainees making pure exclamations, the high ranking officers or mercenaries were speechless seeing the value and the meaning of Haroon's throwing knives skills.

"What kind of throwing knives on earth is that elaborate?"

"That's, that's scary. I got the goose bumps."

"Is that even possible? I never heard they could put spirit's power in daggers."

As if they still think it unbelievable even after seeing it with their very own eyes, the guests were still standing up as with a look of waking up from some kind of strange dreams.

"Who is that pal again?"

"He is Haroon, remember? I can see why Piel recommended him. Thinking how he came up with compounding the throwing knives and the spirit, he is amazing.

"And he did say he doesn't belong in any guild, right?"

Their eyes were burning bright.

No matter what kind of principal was behind that throwing knife skill, with that he could be considered as an advanced class mercenary. On top of that, he had a brain of applying his elemental magic. They haven't seen his swordsmanship or any other skills, but they've seen one, and that meant they've seen them all. Especially some mercenary guild leaders' eyes were burning bright.

Some smart ones were already running at the mercenary guild HQ president and Piel.

Footnotes:

¹ 65 steps away: In the raw text, it was written 70 steps away. I believe the author did the math wrong. Counting dummy to 8, from 30 steps away would be 60. (30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65), whereas I believe the author just did $30 + 5 \times 8 = 70$

Chapter 2

Farewell, and New companions.

It was already the lunchtime when the graduation ceremony was done. Before they could take the last meal of the course, the trainees went back to their room to pack their things up. It was a place that holds old memories, of course to other trainees, but especially for Haroon. He took a long time wandering in the simple room and took his clothes that he got when he joined the world of Beyond. It was when he headed out of the room.

"You were great today. If my boss was here, he sure would have tried his best to get you in our guild," said Galli, smiling. He was just leaving his room.

"You too, Galli. Congratulation being a 3 circle."

"Haha, Thanks. All you, though. I could train hard because of you."

Even though Haroon wasn't sure Galli's word was true or not, Haroon felt glad about it. But it wasn't only Galli saying that. It wasn't only one or two magicians who were thanking Haroon. Unlike how they were wearing training clothes, it was cool they were dressed in Magician robes and staffs or wands.

"Pay me a visit if you have time. I shall treat you a glorious meal."

"Hahaha, I could train well because of you."

"My body isn't really coordinated, so I've been only showing you my clumsy side. Pay me a visit, and I will show you who I really am. You know, I've got some position in my guild."

"It was glad to meet you. And with your help, I could reach another level. Take care!"

Magicians graduated in time same time as Haroon didn't leave their room without doing nothing to Haroon. They hugged him or patted his shoulder. Haroon didn't know he was getting so much love from the magicians, so much that he thought he doesn't deserve it since he has been busy with his training, day or night.

'But Nemion, She...'

Nemion and few other magicians didn't show up. Since he and they had the similar age, he thought he was close with them, and they didn't show up even after he has proved that he is a magician. Haroon felt betrayed but blamed himself. If he let them knew he had Brat with him, it wouldn't have come this far. It went like he has tested their trust on him.



Unlike the other trainees heading to the canteen, Haroon went under the tree grown on the corner of the Square with Elser and ate the lunch that Elser has prepared herself.

"Take some of these too."

Haroon tried to control his expression, but he just couldn't. He was eating the food she claimed she prepared in the early morning, but the taste of it was somewhat so interesting that his tongue and mouth cannot describe of.

– You ate materials forfeited to be a food.

[Your stats are temporally decreased by some point]

Haroon was eating the food gritting his teeth. Even the UI sound was complimenting the food, but Haroon couldn't stop eating. Whenever his expression changes, Elser gave him another food with great expectation shown on her face. So Haroon couldn't dare to describe what it really tastes like.

"How is it? How is it?!" Elser eagerly asked.

Haroon tried his best to hide the tears and smiled back. He just couldn't ignore her expectations.

"It is de, delicious."

"Hehehe, It sure is! I cooked this with so much care. You know, I did wanted to cook for a man like this."

Elser's face went bright hearing Haroon's lie. It seems she did have a feminine instinct still breathing in the deep part of her mind, hidden from her appearance.

'These foods are not what I can dare to comment about.'

Haroon, at least, wanted to shut his eyes. He felt like he wasn't allowed even to cringe his face, seeing how starry her eyes were. He respected Elser's cooking skill to make something to have a discord of sweetness, spiciness, saltiness, and sourness. Thank god Haroon's general view on the food is 'Everything will be the same when it goes down to his belly'. After eating an enormous amount of food that requires superhuman patience, he was able to avoid her innocent, but scary looks.

While Haroon was eating, Elser has been looking at the armor set and Grade-D Mercenary Identity Plate¹ that he received for being the Top Trainee, then she did something with the plate. She waited until Haroon finish eating his lunch, and asked the question she eager to ask.

"How did you became an Elementalist? You didn't have that ability when we first met."
"Well, That's..."

Haroon told Elser what happened during the course, and how he desperately wanted to be a magician because of the Quad Wankers, and how he coincidentally acquired an elemental spirit in the drainage.

"So That's what happened. You've gone through a lot. We were, too, concerned about you not being a magician."

She suddenly cringed, making a scary face in the middle of the conversation.

"And who're the Wankers again?"

Elser gnashed her teeth, making a loud noise. If he wasn't lucky enough to learn the elemental magic, she, McKin, and her father wouldn't be able to avoid the dishonor. She learned how much Haroon has suffered because of them so she couldn't let those wankers walk away in one piece.

"Just never mind them. What's the use of revealing them now?"

Haroon thought of letting Elser scold them, thinking how much he was stressed of them, but he decided not to. They already paid for their bad acts. And they will, for more. To be honest, they were NPC, and Haroon was a player. Maybe it was Haroon's bad of interfering their world. Thinking that he didn't want to make the problem even bigger.

"I can't. Do you know what comes first in the Mercenaries' creed?"

The Mercenaries' creed? He didn't even know there is such a thing.

"That is 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.'"

He could understand. In real life, there are laws that don't allow personal revenge. But in this world, the concept of 'law' wasn't properly set in this world as it is based on the Medieval time, but still, there were 'rules' between the individuals.

"Say it. It isn't just your problem. This is also related to my and McKin's pride."

"Cut it out. I made them pay for their act already."

"What do you mean? You already took care of them?"

"Yes, it wasn't an eye for an eye, it was 10 times more than that, so you don't have to fix them."

She kept telling Haroon to tell who it was, but Haroon didn't until the end. He didn't want to tell how he revenge them using Brat. He was satisfied with it, but he was afraid that Elser might think him evil if he told her the full story.

When Elser and Haroon were arguing like that, some were approaching them. It was Elser's father Piel, and McKin. They've been busy dealing with the authorities of Mercenary guild HQ.

"Father, how did you come here...?"

Piel didn't even answer her and stared at Haroon. McKin seemed nervous of the situation and stood at the back of him.

"Are you the damned one named Haroon?"

"I'm sorry? Oh! Yes, I am."

If one can kill a person just by a stare, Piel would be the one. The deadly stare at Haroon had a horrifying force in it. Haroon shrank back without knowing and looked down to the ground as he was afraid of facing Piel's presence that felt like it would pierce his eye like an arrow. But that only lasted for a moment. One of his characteristics woke back up. It was once sleeping inside of him and he has awakened it during the training.

The unyielding Spirit!

He didn't know why Piel was threatening him, but Haroon also didn't have any reason to feel small. If it was McKin or Elser, it would have been different, but he wasn't related with Piel by any mean. It wasn't like he damaged Elser by anyhow, so there wasn't any reason to fear him.

When he reached to that point, Haroon tore his eyes away from the ground and looked directly to Piel's eyes. It felt like Piel's stare was cutting his body like a sword, but he wasn't feared by it. After a short, chilling silence, Haroon's stare got tense. It was because his will and power were added to it.

"What the hell will you do if you stare me like that, you brat!"

Piel's sudden shout made Haroon stumble. Haroon felt perplexed being shouted at. It was Piel who started staring with an uncomfortable expression. But oddly enough, Piel smiled at Haroon, standing dumb faced.

"You are a decent fellow. More than I thought."

Haroon finally realized he was being tested. He wasn't sure how and what Piel tested, but it seemed he did well.

"What's your thoughts on being my student?" Piel continued.

"Pardon me?"

He was still dumb faced as he couldn't get used to Piel's warm words. Seeing that, Elser and McKin were smiling at Haroon. They knew about this already.

"It's hard to find a good student these days. They always seek for an easier method. They don't know that skills are gained only by sweats, desperate efforts, and experience with the dangers of losing one's life. But I think you can take my lessons. Tell me what you think."

Haroon couldn't answer so quickly.

'This is really a good chance!'

If he decides to be Piel's student, class advancement would be no problem. Of course, he didn't have enough Soul Points yet, but combat experience will solve that problem. On the other hand, Haroon would be bound to him. Being related to Piel means he will gain relationships with Piel's relationships as well, and that will bind his free will to one place.

But the most important point is that the world he lives in is different from what they live in. Thanks to Bell, the Top-class capsule, he was able to train without logging out for a long time, but he couldn't live like that all the time. No matter how real the game is, Haroon's life was based on the real world.

The Beyond was really like another reality, but that didn't mean he can live there forever. NPCs were really like another human species, but it was impossible for him to stay there and live with them forever, both theoretically and systemically. Haroon finally opened his mouth after long, serious consideration.

"Thank you for your offer, but I need to refuse it."

"Why? Do you have any idea how good chance this is?" Elser reacted quite violently.

Piel and McKin also inwardly thought Haroon would accept it. But when he refused, their expression changed quite a lot. So Haroon said,

"I lied to Elser. I'm actually an Outlander."

"An Outlander?"

"S... so, you are THE Outlander?"

McKin and Elser were surprised here that. But unlike them, Piel looked up at the sky without saying any word.

"You don't mean the Outlanders, who got permission from our Gods to visit our world, under the condition they would kill the monsters? But I heard they can't stay continuously like you!"

McKin's question with surprised expression allowed Haroon to know how NPCs think about the players.

"I'm a quite special Outlander."

Haroon didn't know how to put his state in words to make them understand.

“So you can’t live here continuously, date nor marry someone?”

“No, I can’t. Even though I’m special, I’m still an Outlander.”

Haroon stole a glance at Elser, answering McKin. She seemed to be out of the shock.

“So that’s why. When I first met you, I found it strange that you didn’t know so much about this world.”

Fortunately, Elser didn’t seem to be surprised too much.

“I’m sorry, Elser, that I lied to you. I didn’t know how you’d take, so I made a mistake.”

It was hard for him to move his head up. Haroon felt strong guilt to Elser and McKin who provided him a good opportunity.

“Nah, that isn’t even a lie. To be honest, I didn’t know anything about the Outlanders since I was busy training and directing trainees when the temple made an announcement. And you being an Outlander doesn’t change the fact we are friends, does it?”

“No, We are friends till the end, Elser!”

Haroon felt so thankful for Elser being straightforward. Just like her impression, she was broad-minded and bright, and that made him comfortable.

“What a shame. I thought you might deserve to continue my dream of making a continent-scale mercenary guild, unlike how stubborn McKin refused to. I can’t help but to choose Elser,” said Piel, after a long glance at the sky.

“I don’t know the details of your dream, but I can promise you this, sir. I can’t be with Elser for forever, but I will help her so she can achieve that goal.”

“Will you?”

Elser’s eyes were burning bright.

“I will. Elser is the first friend I met, and she is my savior.”

The shade on his face was finally gone.

“Good. Outlanders are known to be selfish and greedy, but it seems you are, indeed,

different. You've got my expectation, so please, help her a lot."

"I will."

Haroon gladly nodded. He met them only once, but he knew Elser, McKin, and Piel were trustworthy. Even in real life, there were not many people he found trustworthy.

"Soon, the whole continent will be in Chaos. You may be an Outlander, but you will still need to prepare for the Chaos. The old, rotting system will be gone, and new days will come. It will be either the days of a newly united Empire or warring state countries. Whichever, it will be an opportunity for us, mercenaries."

Haroon didn't get what he meant. But From his words and the atmosphere of it, he knew there will be a great revolution in the world of Beyond.

"And one more thing. Your throwing knife skills reminded me one story about a hero who had godlike throwing knife skills, just like you. I'm not sure if it is just a legend or a real person, but they say he has once defeated a sword master with one throwing knife."

"Really?"

Haroon's eyes were burning bright. A man, ruling the world with just one throwing knife.

"I heard it with my own ears from the elder of the Elves, who saved my life in the Black Forest. They don't know the concept of 'lying', so it is probably true. In fact, the legend of that hero is told from mouths to mouths of the Hukran Mountains. Travel around there if you get any chance. Maybe you will stumble upon a good chance."

"Thank you, sir."

Haroon felt his heart was bouncing and his blood getting boiled as soon as he heard Piel's words. It felt like his destiny. His primary goal is getting class advancement, but once that is solved, he decided to chase the marks of that legend.

"Only one year, only one year left on the contracts made with Mercenary Guilds are expired. A wind of change is blowing in the imperial family, it's the wind that was never like before. This only meant one thing; impending chaos. When things are changing, we will lay a cornerstone for one giant mercenary guild. When it is the time, We'll need your help. The number of Outlanders is increasing, and their ability is rising as the time goes, so I think you could be a big help to us."

“Count on me, sir. Given that much time, I think I can be somewhat useful.”

That helped Haroon to understand Piel’s motive. Piel and Elser were dreaming of a giant mercenary guild. Using the chaotic period, he was going to make his mercenary guild much larger, and a stronger guild that can rule on the whole continent. Haroon was glad to help Piel to achieve that dream.

‘It won’t hurt sharing the goal with them.’

Being a Mercenary wouldn’t be so bad. Most of the player’s aim was on leveling up so they could earn some money by obtaining a good item, or gaining some fame by being a ranker. But Haroon had a different goal from the beginning.

Getting stronger. This was the only one goal, and it was the only one thing that he wanted. Whichever class he chooses, he will need a great amount of experience to be a master of it, and in order to gain those, he will need a companion and friends. It would be possible to take steps toward his goal and share the same dream with them.



The dormitory was quite unlike before. Many trainees already have parted. Even after packing up his a few belongings, Haroon couldn’t leave his room for a while.

‘I really should be planning my life. And I will need to know how the other users leave.’

It was fortunate that Haroon was able to meet Elser, and join the Training Course, as he would be ahead of other users, at least about the stat values. But thinking how the Noblemen living in District S and A would be using most advanced game capsules to play the game 24/7 and hired many servants to help them, he realized how behind he would be.

Despite the Necomwall’s intention and effort to separate the two worlds, they couldn’t avoid the power and fortune of the real life indirectly affecting the world of Beyond. So Haroon didn’t want to be disappointed by pointless expectations.

“Oh, right! The class advancement!”

Haroon forgot he was in the game because of the training, and meeting with Brat. Hitting his head with his own hands, he checked his status.

Name: Haroon
Race: Human
Class: –
Level: 10
Title: The Top Trainee of Mercenary Training Basic Course (and other 2)
Health Point: 480
Mana Point:490
Elemental Force Point: 200
Strength: 32 Stamina:38
Intellect: 21 Wisdom 39
Luck: 26 Agility:32(+2)
Sustenance: 22 E.S.P. :7
Focus: 24 S.P.: 40
Fame: 100

By gaining a new title, his S.P. was increased by 10, and he got 100 points for Fame. But rather than those, he was more interested in the increase of the value of other stats, naturally. Those were the points he earned by the efforts of sweat and blood.

‘The title I got after slaying the Catrats increased my stat values, but this time it didn’t. So it means every title has different rewards. I only got some S.P. Is this high for my level, anyway?’

He couldn’t tell. He didn’t have any user he knew and he didn’t log out much enough to compare with the others. But it was certain that he got E.F.P. by obtaining Brat. Of course, it was so low that it could do anything.

Moreover, there was a change in his title. He wasn’t sure how the system determines which title to be displayed, so he decided to search for the title system later on.

Participating every lecture he could take helped him gaining the stat values for Intellect, almost similar to other stats. Newly gained stats – Sustenance and Focus – has increased very much too. Somehow, Luck was increased by 3 too.

Like he always did, he invested all of his bonus points to Luck. He wouldn’t regret it as he thought it was Luck that allowed him to meet the Essential spirit, Brat, even though it was a polluted on.

He opened his skill window this time.

[Passive Skill]

Spirit-Guided Throwing Knives: Lv.1(7.23%)/Lv.5

Controls throwing knives using a special force of a spirit. The impact of it increases as the skill level increases. Uses 5 mana per second.

Sense Sword: Lv.1(20.00%)/Lv.5

Emergency Medical Treatment: Lv.1(2.50%)/Lv.3

Compounding Cure Medicines: Lv.1(2.30%)/Lv.5

Set/defuse Traps: Lv.1(3.00%)/Lv.3

Seeing his skills made him really want to start a journey for the class advancement. Even though every single one of them is basic skills, but it meant a lot for him. Even after he closed the skill window, it felt like he still could see the vivid image of it.

‘First, I need to know the details about the classes, and then I will choose one to be.’

He finally made up his mind and headed to the canteen. There was one thing he still had to do.

After the lunchtime, when all other trainees had left the Academy, he was at the canteen with 3 other work trainees. It was the last labor; dumping the food wastes.

“Nnngh!”

There was several times more food waste than before, but it wasn’t so hard for them, not anymore. Even the weak Rose could carry both buckets full of food waste to the dumping site, without resting.

“But I still feel upset,” said Moggle, seeing other three people.

“At first, I was going to drop the course as this was too horrible. But somehow, I made it,” said Mannen, glancing over the stinky wastes.

“Huhu, it was all Haroon Oppa.”

Rose smiled. Whenever they felt down and weak, Haroon has always been helpful for them. It wasn't like he encouraged them or something, but being sincere to his task and doing his best on it has motivated them, until the end of the course.

"I totally agree!"

"I can't say no to that. If it wasn't him, I might have caused a trouble with those wankers. And if I did, I would have been kicked out. In fact, I heard the previous trainees quit the course not because the course was hard, but because of the discrimination."

Moggle looked at Haroon with thankful eyes. Haroon replied with a smile.

"Nah, it is good to hear I could be a help, but it would have been hard for me if there weren't you guys. I could endure the hard times because you were there for me," said Haroon.

He wasn't lying. If they were motivated by him, so he was by them. Haroon knew that he was able to go through the hardships because he wasn't alone.

"When we meet again, I'll buy you drinks."

"Me too. I know you will be a great mercenary. Just don't act like you don't know me when you become one."

Moggle and Mannen had a great smile on their face too.

"What are you going to do, Haroon Oppa? Are you going to join a guild like us, or are you planning to be a wandering mercenary?"

Haroon fell in thoughts hearing Rose's words. Originally, he didn't join the course to be a mercenary. It was just Elser's help that he was able to join the course.

"I can't say for sure. I haven't made up my mind yet."

He already told Elser and Piel that he walk his own way, and getting a class was his top priority, so he didn't plan that far.

"The others say that you will officially be a student of Piel. Does that mean you will be a wanderer?"

“Probably, since Piel, ‘The brave of the Black’, nor ‘the Silver-haired Witch’ Elser isn’t a member of any mercenary guild,” said Moggle.

He was an expert when it comes to the mercenary world. Hearing his words, the two enviously looked at Haroon. Being a student of a legendary mercenary was a great honor, and it guaranteed the future.

“Whatsoever, I’m really proud to have a friend like you. Moreover, we’ve shared the same burden being the work-trainees.”

Mannen respects Haroon. He always has been, and he will respect him even more as he got to know that Haroon was an Elementalist. It made Haroon uncomfortable, but at the same time, he was proud of it.

“Oh? What on earth, are they here for?”

They turned to where Moggle was facing and they could see the Quad Wankers coming.

“What is it? What made you come here?”

Moggle spoke surly. He was sick of seeing them. Moggle was taking his small magic staff out, as nothing could stop him now since they’ve already graduated.

“I just wanted to talk with Haroon. I’ve got no business with you guys.”

Philip was speaking without any sarcastic mood unlike before. Moggle felt awkward by it as he even took his staff out.

“I don’t buy it. Do you still have anything left to say when the truth is revealed?”

Mannen also cringed his face and spoke angrily.

“No, it is not about that. I came here to apologize for that, and I need to talk with him in other affairs.”

Like Moggle, Mannen felt awkward seeing Philip not fighting back. He wasn’t here for a fight, nor to bully Haroon. Instead, his voice was quite polite and was almost respectful. It was very strange to hear him like that.

"I'm really sorry for what I've done to you guys. I was naive to think that we were superior to you, so I felt jealous of Haroon being ahead of us. Please, forgive us."

"I'm sorry too."

"I... wasn't meant to bully you on training hard. Like Philip said, I was stressed by falling behind, and I made a huge mistake. I'm sorry."

"Um, first of all to 3 of you except Haroon, there was nothing personal. I am sorry for behaving naively."

Moggle, Mannen, and Rose was surprised. They just didn't see the Quad Wankers will apologize to them since they had a good background, and they've got some skills too. In fact, if they have met outside of the academy, they won't even be able to talk to any member of the Quad Wankers because of social state difference.

Speechless, they stole glances at each other. To be honest, Haroon was the one who was getting mocked at, and they weren't stressed too much by the Quad Wankers. Of course, it was hard to live with other trainees as the Quad Wankers made strong, dirty image on them. But it wasn't only their concern but to previous work-trainees as well.

"Mmm, I can see sincereness in your words so I will forgive you," said Moggle, representing other trainees.

The other three work-trainees smiled at them. Crossing their forearm, they shook bad feelings off. That was the mercenaries' way of greetings.

"Well, then, would you excuse us? We've got something to talk with Haroon."

So they looked back at Haroon. They couldn't see any brighter smile from him.

"Then, See you again."

"Take care."

"Oppa, I will introduce you a girl if we do meet again."

They hesitated to leave the place easily as they didn't know how they could meet again, but for Haroon', they left the place.

"Well, what is it?"

Haroon clearly knew what they wanted, but he intentionally talked in an abrupt

manner.

“I apologize from the bottom of my heart for those times. I’ve been misunderstanding you. The rumors said that you have sworn an oath of mana, but I simply didn’t believe that, and I thought you joined the course by cheating somehow. I’m sorry.”

With those words, Philip kneeled down at Haroon’s feet. Haroon didn’t have much time to take a close look at Philip, but now, he could see that Philip is quite a handsome guy, well fit because of the long-going training he took. The rumor says that he learned a swordsmanship that can be compared to one of the Experts. If they met outside of the Academy, Haroon thought he might have wanted him as a friend.

“I am sorry. My father wanted me to be a Top Trainee, and I got jealous of you since you did so well. Also, I once asked one of my friends to search for your record, and he told me your identity is quite suspicious so... I’m sorry!”

A giant guy Gitan also kneeled down at his feet. Haroon thought he looked creepy, and now come to see it, Gitan had a quite childish innocent face.

“I’m sorry, I got carried away. I was once interested in you, romantically, and they told me you are a fake magician so... I’m sorry.”

With a sad face, Serinn kneeled down. She got some tears in her eyes too. There would be no man who wouldn’t hold her hands and help her stand up unless they haven’t seen her beauty, but Haroon didn’t dare to. It was only for a moment, but Haroon saw a sudden, foxy change in her expression.

“I’m sorry too. I’m hot tempered and my thoughts are quite short, so I misunderstood you. But that doesn’t mean you did well too. If you have told us you have sworn an oath of mana, I would have been a friend of yours. I know I didn’t do well either, but there is some of your responsibility too.”

Even when she was apologizing, Ritrina didn’t retreat any steps. Haroon found her likable, much more than Serinn, who is busy passing the buck to others acting weak.

“You don’t have to kneel down. I’ve shaken my feelings off seeing you suffer from the stomachache, so you don’t need to apologize like that.”

So they stood up. They seemed brighter than before. Philip and Gitan’s face looked free

and easy so Haroon could see they were apologizing with their heart. But it seemed Serinn and Ritrina haven't admitted their fault entirely.

"All is well. Let this be our last time we meet as the enemies. Until we meet again. So long"

Haroon turned back, but he couldn't just go away. It was because all four jumped at him and grasp his clothes as if they promised.

"How can you leave us like this?"

"What he said! You gotta cure us."

Their face was very dark.

"I used all treatment I have. How am I supposed to cure you? Moreover, I was about to start a journey tomorrow. Why don't you ask your parents? I am pretty sure there are people that have better remedy than I had. I don't want to take a journey with you guys who don't have any experience."

Haroon's cold words made Philip's hand shiver.

"No! Once you were in, you got to do it 'till the end. If it isn't you, we will be dumpers once again. I'd better die than being one once again."

Philip gnashed his teeth. It was the most embarrassing thing he ever suffered from in his life. In the mercenary guild and in various academies, Philip was considered to be a model mercenary. But he used his mind wrong, only once, to be a one who is being mocked at. He couldn't let it happen once again.

"Yeah, it'd be better to be eaten by the monsters! Much better than slowly dying gushing everything out."

Gitan's voice was urgent too.

"Please, Help us, I don't want to be like that again. Please, think how embarrassing it will be to a beautiful lady like me. Please..."

Serinn was crying. But it was different than the last time. Haroon was sure that Serinn wasn't acting.

“Please, Help me. I will be your wife, no, I can be your maid so, don’t leave us like this. I can’t go to my hometown like this.”

Ritrina, also, was crying.

It seemed they did search for the doctor. Thanks to Brat, the amount of the polluted material remained in their body was so perfect that still allows them to suffer, and be able to move freely.

‘Well, I guess this was a little bit too much,’ Haroon thought.

They were begging desperately as they didn’t know the reason of the illness, but Haroon had a plan in the beginning. And he was about to draw it out. First, he drew a deep sigh and started placing the lures.

“What to do? I must leave tomorrow, even if it is going to be alone.”

“Le, Let’s go together! We will prepare everything we will need for the journey. We will also pay for the materials you will need to make the treatment. I know you are an Elementalist, but two head is better than one, isn’t it? And I might be useful when it comes to combat.”

Now, that was a big catch. Philip was letting words that Haroon exactly wanted. He was almost about to cry though. Haroon was smiling inside but frowned back and accepted him.

“It might be a burden as the recipe of the pill is too hard, and materials are too expensive. But I guess I can take you. The journey won’t be boring together, at least.”

“Really? Hahaha! Thank you, Haroon, really!”

Philip was laughing like a crazy man and shook Haroon’s hand repeatedly. Seeing that, Gitan became even more nervous.

“Take me too. You know I’ve got some strength, right? I will take the labors. Just like Philip, I will prepare the expenses and the cost of the pills. Take me with you, won’t you?”

Haroon felt funny to see a giant guy begging for him. it was almost sorry for him.

“Alright. You are going with me. More expenses prepared, better it will be, I guess.”

“Haha, Thank you! I will think of you as my savior, for the rest of my life. You are not just my savior, but to my father as well, as I’m the only one heir to the guild. If you can cure me, my father would be glad to help you as well.”

Gitan even danced. He was that much glad to have hope he can be cured.

“How, How about me? Take me with you too!”

Foxy, sly Serinn. She gently pressured her voluptuous body on Haroon. She was trying to get away with it, unlike Gitan or Philip. She was making a nasal sound too, trying to make herself cute.

‘You really are a fox.’

Even Haroon, who wasn’t familiar facing women, felt strange feeling seeing Serinn giving off her multi-color charm. But there was one thing Serinn didn’t know. What she was doing was so similar to what S or A Nobles does. Showing off money, power or beauty. That was the one thing he most hated.

“Our Mercenary guild doesn’t have a branch here, so I cannot prepare anything. But I will do anything you say. Cooking, Laundrying, Anything. Even if you say come to your place at night, I will.”

Even though she is hot tempered for women, Ritrina is open minded and honest. There was no branch of her guild in Metropolis, so she was once in despair. But her head was not an accessory she always brings with her. She noticed that Haroon likes money. So she couldn’t be more desperate as she had nothing

“Huh! You say like I’m a ladies’ man.”

Well, indeed he had lots of curiosity about women, but using her like this was far from his intention.

“No, I’m just telling you I am that much desperate. Please, take me with you too. Instead, I will write you a contract with my signature on it, stating that I will pay you the expenses and for materials later. You can trust me because at least, I have my big brother who can keep the contract for me.”

Ritrina was pushed to the edge by Haroon's careless attitude. Philip and Gitan were easily accepted to his party, but as Haroon seemed he wasn't interested in Ritrina and Serinn, Ritrina was alarmed and she mentioned her last card, which was signing a contract. If a mercenary or merchant has signed a contract, the contract needs to be kept even it costs their life. Rather than Serinn, who is still rubbing her breast against him, Haroon was more interested in honest Ritrina.

"Alright, you can go with us. Since you don't have any money now, I guess you can cook for us."

"Yay! Lovely!"

Ritrina was jumping and shouting with joy like a little kid received her birthday cake.

"How about me? Hmm?" Serinn asked once again with nasal sound.

But Haroon coldly pushed her away, also to run away from the good scent.

"No work, no food! I really hate your kind of people. Don't you see how they are preparing expenses and various things need for the journey? I can go through the trouble for them, but who do you think you are that I will work for free?"

"Well, tha, that's... No Teronn gentleman leaves beautiful ladies, like me, behind."

She seemed perplexed but was still trying to show her beauty by brushing her long hair back, and exposed her long neck.

'Woah, she indeed is pretty though.'

Small, cute ears and white neck, and the light blonde was so attractive that it almost moved his mind. His mind was shaken when the scent from the hair reached his nose. Philip and Gitan were already sticking their nose out, but Haroon gathered scattered mind and focused.

"You heard me. You are not going with us. If what you said is what gentleman does, I hate being one."

In real life, Haroon was ignored for the most time of his life for not having biological parents, and that he was incompetent, so he knew how it was important to have money and have the ability to do something. So he had no intention to work for free, at all. Of course, what he was doing now was deceiving, but Haroon thought they

deserve to be deceived.

Serinn was now in despair. Until now, there was no man who could resist her charm, and Haroon totally whamed it. Everybody was dazed in her background and beauty, but Haroon was different.

“You are so mean...”

“If you think so, why don’t you pay? I know you are an heir of a big mercenary guild.”

Serinn was deeply hurt by Haroon’s word. She had never met such a low guy like him. She could move every man’s heart, but when her specialty wasn’t working on him, she couldn’t think of a better move.

“Okay, I will pay the same.”

“You are in. But you are in charge of laundry and cooking, same as Ritrina.”

Serinn couldn’t stop crying for real this time. She couldn’t properly speak, so she had to nod to answer him. Seeing Serinn, in the other three’s mind, respect to Haroon was floating up to the surface.

‘He really is the one. How could he even ignore a beautiful lady’s tears?’ Philip thought.

His eye was shaking quite rapidly. He couldn’t even make direct eye contact with Serinn, and Haroon made her laundry and cook for the party.

‘I’m not his competitor, at least,’ Gitan thought.

‘He won’t be easily moved by the beauty, huh? At least he isn’t stupid as the others. Hmm,’ Ritrina thought.

She was interested. Even though she does get along with Serinn, she’s been thinking Serinn is a pathetic girl seeing how she uses her beauty to play with the men. Of course, those men are pathetic too.

After making the situation as he planned, Haroon opened his mouth again.

“And there is something I need to tell you about myself.”

“What is it?”

They seemed curious. They’ve been thinking Haroon had a different process of

thoughts so they couldn't expect what would come from his mouth. So they were nervous about it.

"I'm an Outlander."

"Huh? You mean THE Outlander?"

"Yes."

They seemed surprised. But that was all.

"So that's why you weren't moved by my beauty."

Serinn finally stopped crying, and frown her face upside down. The Templars have been announcing their appearance through the oracles from the long-time ago. So they knew clearly about the Outlanders.

"But I heard Outlanders disappear and reappear quite frequently?"

Haroon knew what they were questioning. He already has experienced it through Piel.

"Well, I'm quite a special one."

They seemed they don't care much about him being an Outlander. It meant NPCs' view on the Outlanders are not so bad, at least not much as he thought.

There was one more thing he needed to make clear.

"You know, we need to make the rank clear as we decided to journey together."

"What do you mean?"

"If ranking is not properly set, we might not be able to react properly to the emergency situation."

"Well, that's true but..."

Serinn, the youngest in the party, seemed nervous about the situation.²

"First, the leader should be me, right?"

After thinking about it for some time, they nodded. After all, they must rely on Haroon because of their sickness so it couldn't be avoided.

“So no matter the age, I’m the boss here, right?”

“Well, that’s... true.”

Philip seemed uncomfortable but agreed.

“Well then, call me Boss from now on. We five, are not enough to make a guild but, we need to act like one.”

Serinn stuck her lips out, but other three agreed with good grace.

“I agree! After all, you are a Grade-D mercenary, and we are Grade-E mercenaries.”

Simple Gitan. He remembered that Haroon’s rank was promoted to Grade-D, so he had no complaint about it.

“Me too. What’s the matter about calling you Oppa or Boss, if you are curing my sickness? I totally agree.”

As it seemed Gitan and Ritriana agree with him being a Captain, Philip agreed with no objection.

“Then why don’t we actually make a guild? We’ve satisfied the minimum number of beginning members, and being in a guild will help us to get some quests too.”

Philip Suggested. He was the oldest one of five. He was only 23, and he graduated Capital Academy as well, in prior to the mercenary training. But the age was only the number in the Mercenary world. They only cared about one’s ability. They all grew up in that world, so naturally, there was no objection for Haroon being a leader of the guild.

“Phillip, Gitan, and Serinn, you said you have a branch of your guild, right? Prepare the journey then, and bring some extra expenses as well. As I need to gather the materials for the treatment, let’s meet at Guild office near the west gate the next morning.”

They were alarmed because they knew how hard it is to prepare for the long journey, so they looked at Haroon with a surprised look, but Haroon didn’t care about it. It wasn’t his work anyway. Since they’ve been mercenary in their young age, they will do well.

“Well then, see you tomorrow. Oh right, don’t forget to bring 100 Gold, each, for the materials for the pill. And I guess 30 gold would be enough for the journey expenses, right? Don’t look at me like that. It’s not like I leave any margin, after all.”

Leaving them alarmed, Haroon left the place and head to his room. He was going to take his packed bag and log out at some kind of inn. To get a class, he will need to go to the class advancing town, and it needed to be the closest one from the Metropolis.

Footnotes:

¹ Grade-D Mercenary identity Plate:

In the raw text, it was originally written ‘4th-grade mercenary identity plate.’ But I thought it would be weird to see 3rd-grade being higher than 4th grade, so I chose alphabet system to avoid any misunderstandings. Just in case if you wondered what this footnote was for.

² About the age

This is kind of an unspoken law: If you are older, your social rank is higher. Unless it is some special relationship, like military, politics, etc.

Chapter 3

Brother Jinsoo

After disconnecting with the server, Haroon opened his eyes in the capsule. Unlike the first impression he had with the capsule, it felt so comfortable and warm that the capsule was like an old home he lived for a long time. Maybe it felt more like it because there was a family, Bell, waiting for him.

“Bell, how is Beyond?”

– “It is great. More users are newly registering as the time goes. As the average level of user rises, more item is being registered on the trading site, so the exchange and auction sites are being active. Also, there are many users who claim they have received a quest. Seeing these, the only reason the beyond wasn’t game like, is that their level was too low.”

Even though Haroon’s question was very vague, Bell knew what he wanted, and answered exact points that he wished to know.

“Bell, please tell me things you searched about the class advancement.”

Thanks to Bell, he didn’t need to read everything. She will be able to tell him summarized information anyway.

– “Oh, you reached level 10 too? when?”

“I don’t know. I’ve been focusing on training only with UI sounds off. When I checked, I was already level 10.”

Even though the players of Beyond needs to travel to the point towns or cities in order to get a class, it has been 3 months in game time already, so there must be many players who got their first job.

– “Unlike the other game, Soul Points(S.P.) are the most important stat you need to gather to get a class. In the world of Beyond, S.P. can be earned by contributing to the world in somewhat way. Killing one Orc gives you about 1 point, but you cannot earn it in the normal hunting ground for users.”

Haroon, at least, knew that much.

– “The fastest way of earning S.P. is killing boss monsters or granting the titles. Even though some classes can be earned by being a student or apprentice of an NPC, it cannot be done if you are going to get classes related with swords unless you have enough S.P.”

That’s fair. In Haroon’s case, he hadn’t started a journey yet, but he acquired 30 S.P. by slaying the Catrats. If the journey is safe, he will be able to acquire enough S.P.

‘I don’t need to hurry. I’m late anyway. If I can make a mercenary guild and receive a quest, I will. And by doing so, I will be able to reach the point city and get a class.’

Haroon asked Bell to show him the map and chose 3 cities for his destination. It was the closest one from the Metropolis. Either way, a new life will be waiting for him.

– “But Oppa, there is one problem you got to settle first.
“Hmm? What is it?”

Bell hesitated to say. But she opened her mouth a moment later.

– “It’s about the nutritional materials provided to you when you are playing the game. Most of them are running out. If you don’t fill them up soon, you won’t be able to play the game continuously, or improve your physical ability, not as fast like before.
“Oh, is that so.....”

Haroon didn’t see it coming. He remembered how much materials he poured into the capsule, and realized how big trouble he was in.

“How much would it cost?”

– “I haven’t checked that far. I’m searching the need of amount and cost of the general materials, but herbal medicines cannot be found online. In your case, there are too many rare herbs being poured into your body, and obtaining it is yet another problem.
“Yes, that will be a problem too. There were many things that cannot be obtained in the Barrier. But I shall focus on getting a class first.”
– “Oh, there you go. This is the list of materials you will need in one month.

Bell displayed a giant list on the hologram. The amount of food he ate last month was

unimaginably much.

“Are you kidding me? I really ate this much?”

– “Yes. Though, note that I have included 10 extra days in the calculation. I estimated that you will take up to 10 days, based on the other’s review. The calculation shows that if you buy these in the mall, it will cost a little bit more than a \$1,000. Of course, this doesn’t include medical materials.”

“Darn! It’s like I poured them down to my stomach.”

– “And that explains how your body improved a lot: your body’s metabolism was active, several times more than the others.”

Well, she got the point. The problem was on that he can’t estimate how much more money he will need playing the game. He had no income, but now he has to expect a regular outcome and more uncouneted.

“Nothing is free, huh?” saying, Haroon deeply sighed.

Bell smiled back. She seemed to try to relax his nerves.

“Well, the class advancement is the first. Earning the money comes after that. I know they will be my flesh and blood, so even if I will need to do hard labors, I will. “

Haroon clenched his teeth, determining he will earn that much money regularly, no matter what it takes.

“And Bell, can you gather data about prices in Beyond?”

He will need to prepare lots of things for the journey. And as the game has been running for quite some time now, it won’t be hard for Bell to collect data about the prices, and it will help him out from getting ripped off.

– “Yes, it won’t take long.”

So Bell collected the data for him, and he spent an hour reading it.



When he was about to head out to the mall, he stopped by Jinsoo's house.

'Would he be at home at this hour?' Haroon asked.

But he knew the answer already. He wouldn't be at this hour, on the business day.

'He must be walking at the farm right now.'

With a bittersweet smile, Haroon continued his way. He needed to go to the mall. On the way back, maybe he could catch up Jinsoo going back to his house from the work.

Then suddenly, there was a noise. It was the noise made by the elevator. The person coming out from the elevator was Jinsoo. He was wearing an old coat that covers the entire body and a turban that covers his face, only exposing his eyes. Turban was covered with a thick dust, and his eyes were covered with a thick cloud of tiredness.

"Hey, Jinsoo!"

"Oh... Have we met before?"

Surprisingly, Jinsoo couldn't recognize Haroon. Even Haroon wasn't wearing a coat nor the turban as he wasn't going out of the building yet.

"It's me, Haroon! I mean, Jungmin."

"Huh? Jungmin?"

Jinsoo's eyes widened. He took quite a time looking up and down at Jungmin, but he couldn't easily erase surprise in his face.

"Is that really you?"

"Haha."

As Haroon didn't answer but laugh, Jinsoo rubbed his eyes and took another look at him. It wasn't Haroon that he knew. The voice was same, but the well-balanced body and narrowed face confused him.

"Are you really Jungmin?"

"Have I changed that much? I'm not quite sure."

Haroon couldn't laugh anymore as Jinsoo's reaction was too intense, so he took a look at his own body. Of course, he has changed that much. He, indeed, gain some weight, and his face got rounder, but he didn't think Jinsoo wouldn't recognize him. After some moment, Jinsoo found a star-shaped scar on Jungmin's forehead and said.

"You are! You ARE Jungmin!"

It was the scar that he got on his first day on District F. On that day, he got robbed on the street, and got attacked by a mob. Jinsoo was the one who saved him from them, so Jinsoo was able to remember that scar.

"What happened to you?"

"I exercised as if I was going to kill myself from the day we've last met."

"Wow! You really have changed so much. I almost couldn't recognize you."

Jinsoo took a closer look at his muscles, checking how hard his muscles are.

"I can't believe how you've got this much muscle just in a month, no matter how much you've exercised. That's a really fascinating change you've made."

Haroon smiled back. It felt great to be credited for that, especially from who he was close with.

"But why are you coming back so early? I thought you were at work at this hour."

"Well, it's a long story."

Jinsoo's face suddenly got dark. Haroon felt sorry for asking a sensitive question, and he was worried about him.

"Jinsoo, if you have time, won't you go to the mall with me? I was worried that I might need to buy quite much anyway. Let's go together and get a lunch. We've got a lot to catch up."

"Shall we? Let's go then. I went out for a walk as I needed to clear my mind, but it got even more cloudy as there was no one to meet."

Jinsoo gladly accompanied Haroon.



The malls were located at the border of District F and D. Even though it was quite a distance for a walk, it didn't feel so far for the two. They really had a lot to catch up so the time flew by.

"Why are you buying so much?"

Jinsoo was surprised how Haroon was filling the shopping cart.

"Well, I do need them all."

Haroon felt uneasy to tell that he's got a premium capsule that automatically feeds him the nutrients, and he needed to buy all of this to fill the tank. He knew how hard Jinsoo tried to get a distributed product, and he was feeling so grateful to have one. There was no need to hurt him like that.

Jinsoo wondered why everything Haroon buys were a liquid or powdered product, but soon he didn't care much of it. Even Jinsoo was with Haroon shopping together, his face changed and went silent occasionally as if he remembered something bad.

Just as Bell said, all the product he bought cost a little bit more than a \$1000. Haroon drew a deep sight paying the bill using the in-body mechanical chip connected to his bank account. He needed four largest plastic bags to carry everything, but that was light enough for him compared to training he usually did. "Light-handed", they head to the ground floor, where the restaurants are located.

It was little early for the meal, but spending time drinking tea and chatting was a luxurious thing, at least for the residents of District F. As they both grew up in District F, they both thought it is worth to spend money on something that can fill up one's stomach.

They both ordered a meat noodle. Haroon hasn't eaten it for a long time, and it was just as good as usual. Enjoying the noodle, the table was silent for some time.

"Jinsoo, what happened to your work?"

Haroon asked, slowly drinking the soup. He was looking for a chance to ask it.

"It's a long story. By the way, do you intend to play Beyond?"

"Huh? Beyond?"

"Right."

Haroon was confused by him mentioning Beyond so randomly.

"There are some creeping bastards I want to give a lesson, but there aren't much of friends that could help me."

"You mean, in the game?"

Haroon was even more confused to hear Jinsoo furiously letting out those words. He never showed that much anger before. It was very odd to find him like that, as he thought Jinsoo was the gentlest person he ever met.

Jinsoo gnashed his teeth instead of an answer. Seeing how his eyes were getting intense, Haroon could figure out he was really angry at those users.

"I am going to kill those, freaking, fuckers."

Haroon looked at Jinsoo without a word. Who could ever make a gentleman like Jinsoo this much angry? Haroon wondered.

"You know, when I was living in a district B as an adopted child, there were some bastards I used to get along with. I think I told you once before. Have I ever told you about a man named Minseok?"

"Yes, I remember that name."

Of course, he could. He used to curse that name for quite some time before, and it was the only moment gentle Jinsoo gets angry at.

"Like I said, he and his friends used to bully me, constantly, in the school I attend until I was rated 'incompetent' and sent to here. That was the worst-fated relationship possible."

Unlike Haroon, who was artificially created, Jinsoo was once living in the orphanage and was adopted to a family. They did abandon him when he graduated the high school. It was when he was rated 'incompetent.'

"Like you know, schools in B district has the students of District S, A, and B. That

fucking bastard had a so-called 'master', a bitch noble named Hyeli Kang. This crazy bitch's hobby was bullying shy, or coward students, like me. Minseok was the stooge of her."

Haroon nodded. He, too, had a similar memory. Noble students living in District S created a clique, being a leader themselves, and having members of students from District A and B. This relationship usually consisted even when they became adults.

It would have been better if it was stopped there. This gang-like relationship was inherited from parents to children, and the children naturally try to hold power in the school, fighting each other, and bullying students who were not a member of any, so-called 'family'.

Bullying was so persistent, and cruel that it would never finish before they become a member, or transfer to another school. Using their physical and social power, that even suppresses teachers or even the principal, they bullied weak students, and this was quite common no matter which Union the students were in.

"Unluckily, I and those bastards started in the same starting point. I didn't know at first, but I get to meet them at the public training center. Then, when I was looking for a party to get to the point city to get a class, I met them again."

That was really unfortunate. Meeting the people he hated again in the game.

"Surprisingly, those fuckers acted friendly to me. At first, I thought they forgot me as it has been years after we graduated. After all, it is known fact that only victims remember the crime vividly, and assailants forget it easily. Coincidentally, there weren't many users who had reached level 10 yet, which is the minimum requirement getting a class, so I couldn't help but join their party."

Jinsoo seemed immersed in the game quite much.

"As if they've fixed their personalities, they were so warm. Can you believe if I told you they even shared their items with me? I'm not quite sure if it was because they were Nobles, but they did have lots of spare items to share. They were not that bad at the games too, so small pod of Orcs were not any problem to us on the journey."

Then, he cringed his face, and his gaze got intense.

“You know I’ve been gaming a lot in my life, right? And I’ve been a Ranger, or a treasure hunter in the game so it wasn’t hard for me to find a Dungeon, which wasn’t far from the point city.”

Level 10, finding a Dungeon! That actually was remarkable. Of course, Haroon found a dungeon too, but that was purely coincidental.

“Then did they steal the dungeon?”

“Heh, it would have been much better if they ended there. It was Class-D Dungeon so the requirement of entering that dungeon was being in a same party of the first finder. So they didn’t kill me when we entered, but it could have been much better if I was killed there.”

Jungmin shut his mouth and eyes. Seeing how his eyelids were twitching violently, Haroon already knew it wasn’t an easy matter.

“As soon as they all got in, that bitch, Hyeli Kang finally has revealed her true color. She gave a sign, and they tied me up and threw me in the snake tunnel. They were SO kind that they even fed me an antidote so I won’t die! Thanks to them, I was able to experience what hell is, by constantly getting snake bites, until the game forced me out for developing a mental disorder. They came out from the dungeon with valuable gears and humiliated me. You won’t believe what I am going to say next: they even urinated on me.”

Haroon was so surprised that he couldn’t close his mouth. Yes, they are Nobles, who aren’t afraid of anything, but how could they do such a thing to someone who was once their classmate, or someone who found them a dungeon? They were so ignorant, perverted sadists.

“As I lost a life like that, I received a penalty of 3-day suspension, and I wasn’t able to work properly because of the trauma. Repeating being in a daze, and getting back to furious, and back to daze. I was fired, and the farm officer reported my state, so I was forced to undergo psychotherapy.”

“I am sorry to hear that. How on earth are you going to make your living?”

Since Jinsoo was fired from the farm, he wouldn’t be able to go that place again. It was one of the most-paid work. Haroon still had lots of savings, but he wondered how Jinsoo was doing.

“I’ve got enough saving for 6 months. I gotta do something with that for now. If I will be in need of money, I gotta sell the info about the dungeon. You know, I’m good at finding some. The experiences should be enough to feed me. It could be better if I find someone who can help each other.”

It was fortunate that Jinsoo was still thinking of backup even though he was burning bright with a revengeful mind.

“What are you going to do with them?”

“What am I going to do? For sure, I gotta take a revenge. Of course, in real life, that can’t be done as our social class are different, but do I need to get humiliated even in games? Of course not. At least, I will make their current character not playable. ‘have received psychotherapy’ in my record made me my life unplayable. Even if it costs my life, I won’t be going alone.”

“No, you won’t be. They need to get wrecked.”

Haroon too was greatly angry at them. Jinsoo’s story reminded his bad memories, how he was bullied for being weak and incompetent.

“So, some of my friends agreed to help me. Only if I were more bright and communicative, I might have more friends, but you know how I am.”

Though, that wasn’t only Jinsoo’s problem. It was same for Haroon as he has transferred from schools to schools.

“Revening in the real life cannot be considered, so we’ve got to assault them in the game. Are you with me?”

“I am. What should I do?”

Jinsoo’s face became bright.

“I need to meet my friends first. I’ll be meeting 3 friends at Count Jorlen Castle. They are victims of bullies as well, but each one of us has a special talent, so there must be some way for us. And now we have you too! It might be a little bit late for you to begin the game now, but you will be a great help for us. I will guide you how to level up fast, so join us quickly.”

Though he never heard of Count Jorlen Castle, he probably would be able to get there as he was free to move.

“To be honest, I’ve started playing Beyond already.”

“Really? Since when?”

So Haroon told Jungmin briefly how he got to play Beyond. Of course, he didn’t give details, just that he received a console and money to pay the subscription fee. Actually, Haroon was mainly concerned about him being a mercenary, that Jinsoo might look down on him. Jinsoo seemed surprised, but it was a pleasant one to him.

“Huhu! I was about to get a class. When I get one, I’ll head there. Oh right, from now on, and please call me Haroon. I just like that name.”

“Okay. I feel like I’ve got an army to have you. Details are being made by my friend Maron, so let’s discuss the plan when you join us in the game.”

Jinsoo spoke in excitement. Every help counted for him at this situation. They continued talking about the beyond for a while, then they realized waiters were giving them deathly glare for taking up a table, so they were driven out by it. On the way to their house, Haroon could learn how the users play the game, feeling differences what Bell collected and what Jinsoo told him.

“You know, you really changed a lot.”

“How can you tell?”

“That you have no problem holding four heavy plastic bags. It seems not only your body become muscular, but you’ve got quite some strength too.”

Jinsoo admired it. He knew how heavy it is he had to drop it not so long after he started carrying one, but Haroon made it seem so easy for that much distance. Jinsoo knew he will easily get into the Barrier Defense army if he wanted. Jinsoo once went through the admission test because he wanted to serve there.

“Well, all thanks to herbs my stepfather sent me, and regular exercises.”

Though Haroon told Jinsoo briefly about the capsule, he just didn’t know how great Haroon’s capsule is. It never went to the public so he wouldn’t believe even if he told him it exists. As Jinsoo never saw Haroon’s bare muscles, he easily accepted Haroon’s lie, that he only did regular but extreme exercises.

“Yes, even I feel great that you’ve been redeemed like that for having a painful childhood.”

Even though there was nobody who can blame Jinsoo being jealous about it, he was very sincere, that he only felt happy about Haroon being lucky.



After the parting in front of their houses, Haroon poured everything into the slot placed next to Bell. It took some time, but it made him proud.

“This should give me at least a month.”

It felt like he’s been an animal that prepares its hibernation. All he’ll need to prepare now would be the herbal materials. It was painful to spend his savings, but he needed to. The problem was not on the money, it was actually on obtaining those herbal things. When he gets into a class, the auction will be more active, so that’s when he can sell the items he luckily got. ‘Only if the exchange rate is like now,’ he hoped.

Footnotes:

¹ Brother Jinsoo.

Just a little context that might help you understand the title better. The raw text was 진수 형 (Jinsoo Hyung), where 형 is the suffix that males put at the end of older (up to 9 years difference usually) males’ name. When it basically means ‘older brother’, use of it shows how close they are. Maybe this could be translated into... ‘bro’, I suppose.

Chapter 4

A journey for a class advancement

It was the middle of the night when Haroon logged into Beyond. It was a long day, and there was too much thing he had to take in, both in the real world and Beyond. He was very tired so he could sleep just as if he passed out. Seeing the surroundings, he realized he wasn't in the Academy anymore. He was sleeping at the inn.

He could see the sun rising, driving the darkness out.

'Seems I still got some time.'

Haroon and the Quad Wankers appointed to meet after the morning meal. For last three month, Haroon got used to waking up early so even though he had nothing else to do, he woke up at this hour. After lying on the bed for some time doing nothing, Haroon realized he had things to do.

"I shouldn't just spend time like this. I still haven't checked the armor set I received."

Of course, Haroon didn't expect much from it as it was the reward of a basic course, but he still hoped for good ones as it was given to the 'Top Trainee'. Haroon took out the armor set and checked its stats.

Mixed Hard Leather

Class: Rare+

Armor: 30/30

Durability: 200/200

Requirement: –

A hard leather crafted by Half Dwarves. It is Crafted with 5 different types of leather compressed together. When it indeed has admirable hardness, the durability is on the another level. Stain-free, and capable of long journies.

+3 Strength

Mixed Leather Shoes

Class: Rare+

Durability: 200/200

Requirement: –

Crafted with mixed leather and Gryphon's flight muscle. The dream of Gryphon that still wants to fly, is on the shoes. Half Dwarves made it half-boots style. Stain-free.

+5 Agility

Mixed Leather Arm Sleeves

Class: Rare+

A armor:120/120

Attack Damage:15~20

Durability: 300/300

Requirement: –

Crafted with Ogre's skull and covered with mixed leather. Ordinary swords won't damage the leather nor the bones. It has slots to put daggers or throwing knives.

+ 10 fire resistance.

Mixed Leather Gloves

Class: Rare+

A armor: 120/120

Attack Damage: 30~40

Durability: 300/300

Crafted with several layers of mixed leather and hardened with Ogre's bones. It is hard enough to break ordinary iron swords. Strong against various poisons.

+ 5 Strength

Haroon couldn't hide his laughter. He never imagined that this kind of item could be rewarded passing the Basic course.

'I thought it wouldn't be normal class items, but I didn't even expect rare items.'

Getting those items, he wasn't worried about not knowing gears anymore. With a large smile, Haroon equipped those.

-You have equipped set armor: Mixed leather armor set.

-You have earned set bonus.

Mixed Leather Armor Set Bonus

Apart from the effects of individual gears, equipping the complete set of gears gives you extra stat bonus

- + 10 Strength
 - + 100 Armor
 - + 50 Durability
 - + 10 Agility
 - + 10% Fire Resistance
 - + 10% Magic Resistance
-

Haroon dropped his jaws. He got fire and magic resistance, not to mention he got additional stats. +10% M.R. meant he would get 10% less damage from Magic, so it is quite an effect.

'Should I just sell it?'

It isn't binding item anyway, does he actually need to get this good gears? He concerned for a while and then decided not to sell it as it was the proof of his skills.

'Let it be. I'll equip these for now.'

Haroon's appearance with a gray armor was a symbol of a typical warrior. Though he might not be that much muscular, tall height with a massive chest and thin waist was something that people would expect from a swordsman, even though he wasn't

wearing a sword yet.

Haroon equipped throwing knives and daggers that he got during training in arm sleeves and holders made on the belt. While he was at it, he checked the steel sword that Elser gifted him.

Steel Sword

Class:Uncommon++

Attack Damage: 50~70

Durability: 220/250

Requirement: –

A steel sword crafted with the unique way of Half Dwarves. The blade will not get damaged easily. Very durable. Suitable for Swordsmen or Mercenaries who goes under frequent combat.

+ 5 Strength

Steel Sword, also, had spec beyond his expectation. Moreover, it was very precious as it was the gift from his first friend. It was the perfect gift to him, who is going out of the city for his first time.

Haroon ate a breakfast at the restaurant right next to the inn and headed to a Guild Office near the west gate. That was the meeting point with the Quad Wankers. When he got near the office, he could see them with enormous sized bags. Haroon wasn't sure what and how they packed stuff, but he couldn't understand why they brought so many things. Well, it wasn't his bag so he didn't really care.

“Boss!”

“Why are you so late, Boss?”

Gitan and Ritrina welcomed him. They seemed excited about the journey, whereas Philip and Serinn seemed discontented for living journey like that.

“Hey, Haroo... Boss.”

“Oh, you are here.”

Haroon didn't like their attitude but decided to greet back anyway. He just didn't want to mess up the mood when they didn't even begin the journey. The title 'Boss' however was quite awkward to use and hear, but it felt good anyway.

"So, where are we heading?" Gitan asked

"We are heading Viscounty of Paros,"

which was the closest point city from the Metropolis that offers job advancement.

"Huhu, that's where my guild headquarters is."

Gitan agreed with joyful cheer, but the other three seemed unsatisfied. Since they couldn't avoid taking a journey if was natural for them to prefer somewhere close to their hometown.

"At least we ARE traveling. After all, I wasn't sure where to stay until my guild arrives the Metropolis."

That made other people relax their face. After all, they couldn't go to their hometown on their own, and it wasn't like they could mooch off to other guilds. So their only hope was on their guild members' arrival on the Metropolis.

Of course, those five seemed not enough for a long journey. A way to the Viscounty of Paros was quite a dangerous path even for an ordinary guilds squads. They were counting on that Haroon is an Elementalist, and that their skill is good enough for the journey. Even if their skill isn't good enough, if he wants to go to the Hell, they had to follow him anyway because of the unknown illness they've got.

"Well, you know what comes first."

Haroon evilly smiled and put his hand out. The Quad Wankers, except Ritrina, shut their eyes and took a bag of money from their pocket. They had to use pester power to 'receive' money from their guild branches. Thinking how the branches have minimum budget possible, they shall think of it as money of tears. Not their tears, though.

-“First, you took every stuff in this branch, and now you want every supply the branch has? Why are you doing this?!”



It felt as if they could still hear the branch manager they've just requested money from. It would be a big problem when their parents find out what they did.

'I'm sorry, Manager, but I want to live too,' they thought.

Their hands handing over the money were shaking. They tried their best to calm it down. Haroon counted the money to make sure they paid properly. Haroon felt proud he just earned as many as 390 Golds, and that didn't include Ritrina.

“Well, Let's go to register a new guild.”

They were able to register a new mercenary guild without any problem as they fulfilled minimum requirement which is having 5 members. It is just that Haroon felt stingy about paying 10 gold. After wearing a bracelet with guild leader symbol on it, he gave an evil smile at the Quad Wankers, who were watching him with jealousy. He was thinking about getting registration fee from them later on.

As Philip suggested, Haroon decided to name the guild the Gusts of Wind. As the members of the guild are 5 and they had no experience, the guild was rated at the lowest rank: D. When the procedures were done, they have checked the bulletin board, just in case if they could get any quest, only to get disappointed.

“Let's depart then. If there is anything we forgot to bring, we always can buy one in the next village. We need to arrive the Earrock by today so we need to hurry.”

Earrock is ear shaped giant rock. It was about a day long journey to there.

“It would be faster if we ride horses.”

“Shut up! Do you think horses are as cheap as the apples? You have no idea how I spend even my last bronze to buy the herb plants to cure you guys.

That really wasn't the reason. Haroon doesn't know how to ride the horse, so he was planning to walk there in the first place. But it was true that horses are expensive, according to Bell. Even the working horses are over 20 gold each. Rideable horses are

over 40 gold. Although it was the reasonable price as the Horses are the main, and only the mean of transformation, it simply wasn't affordable, especially for the users who just started getting their first class advancement.

Even it was quite early in the morning, the gate was quite crowded. There were so many people coming in and going out with lots of goods being transported. Well, it sure is a natural thing for a metropolis where millions live in.

"Ah, dang. Why's the checking so tight today?"

"Damn. Look at there. There are even the Knights today."

Merchants chat reached Haroons ear. He could see the Knights who were wearing shiny full-plate armor.

"Did something happen today?"

"No, it has been like this for a couple of weeks. Not sure what's the reason is, but they check every bags and baggage going out from the metropolis."

Just as he said, the Knights were directing the gate guards to check every corner of the bags and baggage.

"Did a god damned criminal escaped or something? What a nerve they got."

"Eh, who knows."

Hearing them chatting, Haroon and party members could pass the check quite fast. It was because of the symbol of mercenaries and there weren't too many bags to be checked.

After a while, they looked back with mixed feelings. In their sight, there was the Metropolis receding into the distance as they walk away. Unlike how they've seen it inside, it was overwhelmingly large. The walls that shelter the giant castle were at least 5 meters tall, and it was so long that he couldn't track the end with his bare eyes.

'Now I feel bad that I didn't look around properly.'

But that thought only lasted for a minute, then his mind was filled with the excitement of going out to the wild of the Beyond as a mercenary.

Haroon paused and opened his status window.

Name: Haroon
Race: Human
Class: –
Level: 10
Title: Mercenary guild leader(and other 3)¹
H.P: 480
M.P: 490
E.F.P: 200
Strength: 47(+15) Stamina: 38
Intellect: 21 Wisdom: 39
Luck:26 Agility: 32 (+12)
Sustenance: 12 E.S.P: 6
Focus: 14 Leadership: 100
S.P: 30 Fame: 300
Fire Resistance: +10%
Magic Resistance: +10%

[Guild status window]

He got a new title: Mercenary guild leader, and he got a new stat named 'leadership', and it is probably the reason he got 10 more S.P. and 200 fame. According to Necomwall's announcement, there will be benefits dealing with merchants or nobles when the user has over 500 fame.

Also, there was a line written [Guild Status Window] blinking with red color.

'Ah, it seems I can check my member's status as a leader.'
"Guild status window!"

Name: **The Gusts of Wind**
Rank: Small, Class D Mercenary Guild.
Specialization: Unknown
Members: Philip, Gitan, Serinn, Ritrina

He touched Members tab, and there, he could browse every member's status.

Name: Philip
Race: Human NPC
Class: Swordsman
Level: 35
Title: Class D Mercenary

H.P.: 1,140
M.P.: 735

Strength: 43 Stamina: 47
Intellect: 25 Wisdom: 20
Luck: 5 Agility: 15
Focus: 5

‘Huh? Why are his stats so low?’

Since Philip already had a class and reached level 35, he had way more hit point and mana, but stats were not that high. All he had was an extra stat, which still remained at 5. Wondering, Haroon checked Gitan’s status which was right next to Philips.

Name: Gitan
Race: Human NPC
Class: Swordsman
Level: 25
Title: Class E Mercenary

H.P.: 1,220
M.P.: 475

Strength: 57 Stamina: 55
Intellect: 5 Wisdom: 5
Luck: 5 Agility: 5

And Gitan is worse than Philip. Strength and Stamina is high, but his wisdom and intellect are too low. He could easily what character Gitan is.

‘Obviously, he is a Tank.’

Name: Serinn

Race: Human NPC

Class: Swordsman

Level: 21

Title: Class E Mercenary

H.P.: 765

M.P.: 735

Strength: 25 Stamina: 27

Intellect: 18 Wisdom: 25

Luck: 7 Agility: 11

Coquetry: 6

Serinn’s stat is quite normal. There is no characteristic other than she is quite balanced. On the other word, she doesn’t have any good side which meant she is a useless character. Though, it is interesting how she has stat ‘coquetry’.

Name: Ritrina

Race: Human NPC

Class: Swordsman

Level: 24

Title: Class E Mercenary

H.P.: 800

M.P.: 575

Strength: 32 Stamina: 31

Intellect: 14 Wisdom: 16

Luck: 8 Agility: 22



Ritrina is a strong and agile character. Although she might be hot tempered, she must be more useful than Serinn.

Haroon fell in thoughts seeing the Quad Wanker's status window. To travel as a group, the leader needs to divide the role and make flexible orders to avoid dangers. When he knew by his brain, he didn't have any experience so he was worried about it.

'I guess we will find out when we face weak monsters.'

So Haroon closed the window. But there was one thing he couldn't understand. In Philip's case, his level was over 30 but his stats were lower than Haroon whose level is just 10 and didn't even get a class advancement.

As he analyzes the Quad Wanker's status, he found out that; they started with 50 total stats, with the level bonus that would be about 110, and gained additional stats by training with an average of 1. It is so different from his stats. Compared to them, he is a monster.

'I suppose it is because of Bell's performance and Herbal Medicines' effect.'

Haroon realized how helpful Bell and the herbs are.

If Bell didn't supply him needed nutrition and didn't relieve his fatigue at the right hour, he wouldn't haven't been able to train that much ignorantly. In other words, he wouldn't be able to improve that much without Bell's help.

Anyway, he felt good that he gained additional stats by equipping Mixed Leather Armor set and a steel sword.

"Alright, let's go!"

Like that, Haroon and the Quad Wankers mightly started their journey to Viscounty of Paros.



The area around the Metropolis is a literally endless green field. It seemed perfect for pasturing animals, but for some reason, they only could see dense grasses. Probably because of the Monsters.

He could see figures near the horizon, and he thought they might be people farming food. But near them, there was just a giant, well-beaten road in the middle of the grass field.

At first, he was moved by the ridiculously wide green field. But the emotion soon went away as the scenery hasn't changed at all for a while. The grasses were mostly tall, about to their knees. He wasn't sure what kinds of they are, but they were quite sharp and hard.

As the sun gets high noon, it started gushing out the hot breath and started poking them with stingy sunlights. At that time, as if the glasses were being cooked, Haroon could smell the grasses. It was something he never had smelled before, but soon, it faded away.

They went silent for a while. Both Haroon, who was enjoying the scenery and smells that he can never experience in the Union covered by the Barrier, and the Quad Wankers, who were in mixed feelings of excitement and worries of their journey. When it was the time that the sun tries its best to heat the earth, they decided to stop under a tree with a large, dense leaves.

"Boss, it is typical to rest in the middle of the day. Grab a lunch, maybe take a nap, and when the air gets cooler, that's when you know you have to depart. It is one of the ways to make the body less tired."

They stopped to rest as Philip suggested. Unlike the others, Philip had experiences of long journies.

"Hey, you, prepared the food, quickly!"

"Well about that... Alright, Boss."

Serinn and Ritrina didn't really think they would be one preparing the food, so they looked at each other and shrugged. But it was a promise. Though they may not be the nobles, they are daughters of leaders of powerful guilds. They've been living in a

luxury, so of course, they didn't know how to cook.

"What should we do?" Troubled, Serinn asked.

"Isn't it obvious? Boil the soup, and make sandwiches with bread and smoked meats we bought."

Ritrina said it easily. She continued.

"Then how about you build the fire, and me taking the care of the rest?"

Like that, Ritrina took the lead. Serinn felt uncomfortable, but she had to get along with it as she lost the lead. She took her lips out and started collecting dried branches. And then, she called Ritrina with perplexed voice.

"But I've never built a fire."

"Huh? But I've never done it too."

Two girls looked at where Haroon was making awkward faces. Haroon, Philip, and Gitan were coming to check the bags.

"What's the matter?"

"Well... We don't know how to build a fire."

Their helpless voice made Philip and Gitan move, but they soon stopped and covered their mouth with their hands. Come to think of it, they have never done it too. This was same to Philip.

"Flints, you can always use your flints. So, who got the flints?"

Philip barely remembered they could use flints.

But they didn't know how to use flints. Of course, they've never seen it happen. Ritrina only packed her clothes and a weapon, and the other two didn't pack their bags so they didn't know where their flints were.

"You're so pathetic. Are you really the sons and daughters of the mercenary guild leaders? And you thought you could go on the journey like that?" said Haroon, clicking his tongue.

Haroon's word cut their heart like a dagger, but they had nothing to say. They've been learning swordsmanship, management, accounting and all sort of thing since their young age, but they realized they didn't have any practical skills for surviving.

"Why are you still standing there? Move away!"

Haroon angrily shouted and it made them angry, they couldn't think of words to counteract, so two girls hesitantly moved away.

Of course, Haroon didn't know how to use flints. But he had an Essential Spirit named Brat. Making a fire was a child's play. The problem was on that he will get poisoned summoning it. That was why he was annoyed.

Haroon turned his back at the Quad Wankers and summoned Brat.

"Brat, Come out."

"What. Is. It? Why did you have to bother me when I was getting a good rest?"

Brat was frowning.

"Oh, you are getting sassy again. I can take that as a giant yes to a question may I punch your face?"

"Alright, Alright! God, if you don't have skills, be kind at least. Gees, violence doesn't solve everything. *mumble mumble...*"

Complaining, Brat accepted his summon and as soon as he came out,

– You are Poisoned.

[Receiving 10 damage per second]

"Quickly, make a fire."

"Oh god, and that was miles away from a big deal. Did you really summon the mighty Brat for that pathetic job? You know what this is? This is like cutting a beef for a breakfast with an ancient magic sword."

"Shut up!"

Critical Hit!

"Aw! *Fire!*"

Only after getting a hit at the back of its head, he stopped complaining and lit the fire on the branch. It didn't take long to be a big fire.

"It's the Spirits!"

"So it is true!"

Serinn and Ritrina were surprised to see some mysterious power to work. And all they saw was Haroon punching in the air and no spirits.

"Damn it! NOW you know, huh, Serinn? Just remember that it was all you."

Ritrina let out her harbored feelings to Serinn.

"Ha! Who could have known that he is an Elementalist? Didn't you hear that he even swore an oath of Mana? After all, I said he MIGHT not be a magician, and I never said I'm certain that he is not a magician. and it was YOU who provoke the magicians to scan him, and concluded that he is not a magician."

"Anyway! It was you who made us slaves."

"Huh, look who is saying."

"Shut up! All of you!" Haroon interrupted.

Haroon frowned. He couldn't believe that he had to waste an antidote just to make a fire. As he shouts once again, everyone gave a start. They never saw him that much angry.

Under the pressure of Haroon, two girls prepared the lunch without saying a word. They took out a pot and put the water and soup powder at the same time. She panicked, and her eyes were shaking unstably, desperately looking for a help but the other three tried their best to avoid her eyes. It was best to save the words and not to help than being scolded by Haroon.

"The lunch is... ready."

Haroon, Philip, and Gitan stopped checking their bags and head to the fireplace. As they got used to the regular meal time, they were hungry enough as the lunch time got dragged with some dramas.

“Here.”

Serinn served the soup and bread, Haroon took it and went under the tree. He ate a spoonful of the soup.

“Yuck!”

“Gahh!”

“Ugh!”

As soon as he screamed, Philip and Gitan screamed too, frowning their faces. They turned their faces at Serinn at the same time.

“Well... That was the first soup I’ve ever cooked.”

Serinn tried to get over the situation acting cute, but they all spit the soup out.

“You tried to kill us!”

“You must be a spy, right?”

Philip and Gitan gave her a hostile stare.

“I told you that I can’t cook. I can’t do this so don’t let me do it.”

Serinn was covering her face with both hands. Her voice was almost crying.

“Boss, just don’t let her cook.”

“I might starve to death if I keep eating these.”

They complained, drinking gallons of water. Serinn was standing next to them with her face covered and head bowed. But Haroon noticed that her shoulder shook just for a brief moment hearing those complaints.

‘So that was your plan? She is impossible,’ he thought.

As Haroon didn’t have any good impression of her, it was easier for him not to be fooled by her. Serinn was smart. But in other words, she was sly and was fast at making petty tricks.

“Alright, I’ll make you a real person. Serinn will be making every meal until she can

make something edible. I'll definitely charge you for wasting foods, so deal with it. Don't worry, she will get good. Everyone needs to start from somewhere."

Philip and Gitan went pale. Ritrina too. They weren't sure if they could survive.

"Well, we saw how Gitan brought emergency foods. There are breads and beef jerkies so we can eat those if what she makes are not edible. But she will have to eat her foods.

That relieved them. But they could see Serinn's face was getting pale, even she was covering her face with her hands.

"Until she gets good. Well, if she doesn't get good until the end, we can always delay the cure and teach her until she gets good. If you are bad at something, then try harder. I can help you with that while I'm with you."

That made all four pale.

'You bitter snake!'

It's what their faces were saying.

"Well, then, have a nice meal."

Haroon tasted the soup once again and drank it with water. And took some portion of bread, and started chewing it with the soup. It wasn't that bad when he tried that. Thinking how he has been eating bitter antidotes quite frequently, and how he endured Elser's extremely tasty foods, it wasn't that bad.

Seeing Haroon well eating the soup, Philip and Gitan tasted the soup another time, only to leave unforgivable pain on their tongue, and it became another reason to admire Haroon. They couldn't even bear to put that in their mouth.

They, except Haroon, had to dump the soup. They filled their stomach with bread and water. Of course, Serinn had to starve.

But they didn't know how impactful that would be. As their body was used to eat a large amount of food to support their training, the stomach started appealing how empty it feels, and that made their bags to feel even heavier. So when the sun was setting and reached the top of the hill, they were feeling starve to death.

“Here, we have a flint so lit a light with it. Since you are gonna be in charge of foods, you should be the one making the fire.”

Haroon handed a flint and a lump of cotton found in Philip’s bag. Philip didn’t know it was there, though. The one who packed his bag was a mercenary that he didn’t know the name of, so he didn’t know what was in his bags.

“Philip, Ritrina, set up the tents. And Gitan, Let’s go set up the traps, just in case to defend ourselves from the wild monsters.”

Everyone sought for a rest so they moved swiftly as Haroon ordered. They had to get their tasks done. But Serinn couldn’t begin and stamped her feet as she panicked, going about to cry at how unkind the other members were. But no one was kind enough to help her. Not even close, as they were angry because they didn’t get enough food earlier in the lunch time.

Setting some traps around the camp site, Gitan and Haroon returned to the fireplace and saw an actual fire. It seemed Serinn has found a way to make a fire.

“Hahaha!”

Gitan checked her face and started laughing. It was quite an entertainment to see her face messed with soots. Philip and Ritrina, who were done with the tent, seemed they were bearily not laughing.

“Good work.”

Haroon patted Serinn’s shoulder, who was busy blowing the wind into the fire, hoping it to get bigger. As she was bowing her head, nobody saw two streams of tears and the smile of joy. It was a small thing, but she felt so proud of herself.

When the new soup was finally made, nobody dared to taste it. Haroon, too, hesitated to taste it and his hands were shaking when he was bringing a spoonful of soup to his mouth. Bravely, he tasted it.

“Hmm, It’s quite nice. It is amazing that you got this good just in a day. Alright pals, get your spoons and try it out. It’s quite edible, unlike the last time.”

Seeing how Haroon liked, the other three bravely taste the soup. Their face went bright. They actually could taste warm, delicious soup. Of course, the powder wasn't properly mixed to the water so they could feel the chunks of it but it was better than the last time.

"This is so emotional."

Like Gitan said, it was an emotional moment, that how they had to worry about foods, on their first day after the graduation. The soup in the lunch was absolutely terrible. Gitan was so concerned about eating after he tasted that. Compared to that, he could consider it happy.

"I didn't know you could experience the hell and heaven by foods," said Philip.

Gitan strongly nodded and ate the soup.

Seeing how they were satisfied by her food, Serinn felt shy and smiled. It was a pure smile, not her habitual, seducing smile.

As they travel like that, the Quad Wankers could naturally call Haroon the 'Boss', and Haroon, Philip, and Gitan could get along as close friends.

Footnotes:

¹ 3 titles

You might ask; Haroon gained another title and he previously had 3 titles, so it should be 4 titles, right? I thought the same, but as it seems the raw text says 'and other 2', I think he lost the title of 'Mercenary Trainee', as he is not a trainee anymore. That's my guess.

² Gusts of Wind

The raw text was '돌풍(突風)'. When the direct translation is 'Squall', I don't think it fits the context. 돌풍 means a sudden violent wind, it is my belief that the word 'Squall' is used when the storm has rain/snow.

Chapter 5

The first combat

It's been 3 days since they started the journey. The path they took was very frequently used and was located in some noble's territories. Despite the efforts of the noble who sent their private army to suppress the monsters, Haroon and his members could encounter the Goblins or Orcs who were out their position on its scout, even up to several times in a day.

Haroon actually needed their existence as they were easy targets for the Quad Wankers to practice the way of combat as a party. And this allowed him to find out several things.

"Gitan, you coward! Block them, Block them!"

Serinn shouted at Gitan as he was frozen in the middle of the field, shaking and terrified by the Orc's hostile charge at him. If the Orc gets Gitan, the next was her.

"Yi-Yikes!"

At last moment, Gitan went pale and collapsed on the ground. His pupil was out of focus. As soon as Gitan collapsed on the ground, she ran away as fast as she could. So Philip and Ritrina, who were waiting behind them, had to take care of the Orc. Philip already had combat experience, and Ritrina has shown good performance in her first combat, and she was getting better.

"I guess it was no use."

"Boss, we should rule them out from the combat."

Like Philip said, these two seemed useless for the combat. Haroon regretted that he chose the Quad Wankers to be his members. At least Ritrina was better than them. But thinking how she gets overwhelmed by her madness when she enters the combat, it was dangerous to put her in the combat as well. For some reason, she was talented at taunting the monsters, even they couldn't understand her language.

Haroon logged out and asked Bell for some information about combat strategies, and came up with one combination.

“Gitan, you’ll be defending, ONLY. Philip, help Gitan to make a giant shield that he’ll be using.”

Haroon made Gitan to make a wooden shield big enough to hide his entire body. Though he may be a coward, he is physically strong so he thought it would be best if he could be Tank of the party. With Philip’s help, Gitan was able to make a wooden shield just in a day. It was as heavy as a man, but Gitan had no problem holding it.

The party had breakfast cooked by Serinn, who wasn’t getting any better and decided to try out their new strategy.

“Alright. Ritrina, lure a monster by taunting it. One by one if possible. Gitan, just block their attack with your shield. Philip, with your skill ‘*Smashing Blow*’, try to kill the monster when its attack gets blocked. I’ll take care of the rest.”

“Hehe, this is going to be sooo much fun.”

Giggling, Ritrina went into the forest. It didn’t take long until an Orc with an ax to chase her to the party and face Gitan with a shield.

As the giant ax was getting dropped on Gitan’s head, he went pale once again. Seeing that, Haroon shouted.

“The shield!”

Gitan shut his eyes and hold the shield out. The ax bounced off the shield with quite a loud impacting sound.

“Philip, *Smashing Blow*!”

Philip came out from the backside of Gitan and struck at Orc’s head, which was still recovering from the aftershock. With an uncanny sound, Philip’s blade penetrated the skull and stuck out of its back. Like its name, the power of the skill piercing vulnerable enemies was amazing. Philip prefers using it over the other skills because the blood won’t splatter as much as the others do. His smashing blow was fast enough for the Orcs, which didn’t give them enough time to block it even if they saw the attacker’s movement.

'I'll definitely get that skill too,' Haroon thought.

"You dick-like bloody fleshed Orc, Come on! Bring your ass on! I'll punch a hole in your stone-head!"

Ritrina has lured another Orc before they knew it. It seemed surprised by the camping humans and hesitated but as soon as it saw Ritrina wagging her fingers, it charged with anger with its club high up in the air. Oh dear lord, just how effective is Ritrina's taunting skill?

"Gitan!"

Still paled, Gitan instinctively pushed his shield front, and Ritrina's face passing him was smiling brightly, like as if she were dying out of fun.

As the pure strengths strike, Gitan and Orc staggered by the aftershock. And this time, even Haroon didn't call Philip, he jumped out with his sword, and struck Orc using its momentum.

"Smashing Blow!" Philip Shouted.

Even before the Orc could recover from the shock, Philip's sword went in and out of the orc's head once again.

It was very grotesque to see a green blood pumping out of an Orc's forehead, but there was no time to see that. 3 more Orcs has followed their fellow, chasing Ritrina.

They roared seeing their fellow falling down to the ground by Human's hands, and it was full of anger and hostility, which was enough to scare Gitan. His face went white out of terror, and his pants got wet but Haroon didn't order the retreat.

"The shield!"

It was three Orc's co-attack. There was no way to find out if it was their instinct to attack the most aghast enemy, or if it was the giant shield that attracted their eyes, but anyway, they attacked Gitan's shield with their weapons.

Fortunately, the fear gave him more power than he normally can, and it made the orc's

weapons to bounce off.

“Smashing Blow!”

Philip, once again, killed an Orc, only to make him vulnerable to the other Orc’s attacks.

“Gitan, Push them off!”, Haroon shouted, throwing a dagger.

Gitan’s trained and prepared body was able to move instinctively even though he himself was terrified. He moved in front of Philip and pushed the shield once again. Thanks to Gitan’s defense, Philip was able to have enough time to ready his next attack.

As the dagger penetrates Orc’s neck, it couldn’t even scream and fell on the ground. It dropped its club and hold its neck, but it was too late. The dagger already has gone through the neck.

“Smashing Blow!”

With Philip’s short shout, the sword struck into the remaining Orc’s forehead. As the sword swirls the brain and went out of the head, the Orc tried to move its arm to attack, but slowly fell down.

“Serinn, skin their leathers. You need to skin it clean this time. Ritrina, help her.”

“Got it, Boss.”

Serinn distorted her face and head to the dead Orcs with a sharp short sword. Ritrina followed her breathing heavily and with madness in her eyes. She was to help to pull the leather. Haroon saw Philip helping Gitan to relieve the fear and he felt proud of it.

‘Now, that’s what I call useful.’

They tried various ways to maximize their strength and minimize their weakness, and Haroon finally found the roles they most suited.

The biggest problem was on Gitan. He is strong enough to lift and throw a man-sized boulder, but no one knew how coward he is. Haroon and the others finally found out why he was working in the office, despite how his size seems to be capable of various combats.

He had to go to the point city anyway, so it was better if he could have some accompanies. With lack of experience and some useful information, Bell found online, they finally made Gitan a tanker through numerous trials and errors.

And to Philip, who had precise and quick sword movement, Haroon assigned him to be a damage dealer of the party. In fact, he was capable of dealing with two or more enemies but he had to practice the skill '*Smashing Blow*' to fight as a party. His slim and light body was allowed him to be agile, which made him perfect for quick and precise stabbing attacks.

Serinn, who was not useful at all, except her beauty shown on her face and body, took most dirty and rough jobs. It was skinning the monsters. She had to endure the smell of blood and odors.

'She does remind me of those bitchy nobles in District S.'

Being useless wasn't the main reason she had to take that job. There were also some personal feelings of Haroon as her attitude of using her beauty was so alike to that behavior of Nobles in real life.

"See how Ritrina's taunt skill is getting better and better. Take her improvement as an example of yours."

"Hohoho, I didn't know how talented I was at taunting. I had no idea taunting others are this much fun. Boss, Thank you."

As the time goes, Ritrina showed her perverted personality. First, she was interested in taunting the opponent with swears and curses with an irritating face, then she somehow got a skill, well, made a skill named 'Taunt'.

Her taunt skill wasn't limited to humans and well affected the monsters as well. It was so effective, that even innocent and coward animals like deers got taunted by her skill too.

'She is mad!'

Once the combat goes into the confused fight stage, her eyes turned so that the others can see only the white part of her eyes, then she went in swinging her swords, laughing. Whoever it is, they would say she is mad if they saw her on that stage. Even Haroon felt frightened by her face in the mad state.

‘This may be our first combination.’

Haroon took the commander role, directing the combat and eliminating dangers from the distance. The Quad Wankers was able to focus in their role as they trusted Haroon’s godlike throwing knife skill.

Coward, but strong Gitan took a role of a Tanker, which cuts the flow of their first attack. Like usual, he couldn’t handle the fear and wet his pants, but he was getting better so the time will solve that.

Philip would be the hidden spear that eliminates the enemy made vulnerable by Gitan’s parring. His powerful and agile sword technique that was closed to be an Expert was perfect for his role.

And Last, and least, Serinn had to take miscellaneous works. She did reject few times to that decision, but Haroon simply pressed those complaints by threatening with the medicine.

Building fire, preparing foods, needlework, laundry. She had lots of works to do, and she didn’t like it but she got used to. Mostly because she realized she had no other skills to contribute to the guild, but she herself was interested in those works.

Chapter 6

Escorting merchants with Rotem Mercenaries

It was right after the lunch meal, when they went over a small hill.

“Orcs, IT’S THE ORCS!” Somebody shouted.

The party looked at where the sound came from. It was from the small grass field on the other side of the hill.

About a hundred Orcs were coming out from the forest and were about to assault the Merchants. It seemed there were 20 horse carts. They gathered into a circle, and it seemed there were only 20 to 30 mercenaries guarding the merchants.

“They are the merchants who were traveling in ahead of us. That explains why we couldn’t see monsters lately. The mercenaries we see must have been clearing them.”

Hearing those words of Philip’s, Gitan suddenly swore.

“Fuck! Why on earth are the Orc Warrior here?”

That interested Haroon. He focused on the frontline of Orcs. He could see an Orc that was two or three feet taller than the other orcs. Its body was very bulky, which seemed it would burst in very short time. It was leading the swarm.

The Orc Warrior. They say three of them could face the Ogres. They learned the existence of it in the Basic Training. There was a lecture about the Monstology.

“Fire Storm!”

“Fire Ball!”

Two female magicians positioned on the cart and cast spell on them.

A giant flame ignited in the middle of a small group of the orcs charging at them, and spread to every direction, burning the Orcs. 6 fireballs cast by another magician was

shoot at different Orcs, making them scream and roll on the ground.

The archers didn't miss that chance opened by magicians and shoot the arrows. Some mercenaries even shoot 3 arrows while the others shoot one.

With Orc's scream, the Orc Warrior's legs stopped. As the chunk of fire and smaller fireballs burn their fellows' body and furs, their fighting spirits were vowed for a bit.

Unfortunately, as the arrows were not shot for some specific targets, it wasn't lethal enough to kill any Orcs. Of course, when the fire was gone out of sight, they could see some suffering from the arrows.

"Attack!"

"Kill them all!"

Mercenaries charged, shouting at the Orcs.

Seeing the combat scene, Haroon got excited before he knew it and started breathing heavily. It felt as if he was in the combat, charging at them. Philip and Ritrina standing next to him seemed they got excited too.

Unlike the other games, this was very vivid, real-like combat. They could feel the pulse and hot blood of the Mercenaries. They could see the wilderness and fighting spirit of the Orcs.

"This is real!" He thought.

The Orcs are the monsters who damage the humans and even see humans as their food. Humans had felt no guilty killing them. But it was that the battle was the matter of life and death that excited him.

The battlefield formed about 20 steps away from the carts, the midpoint of the carts and Orcs when they encountered.

Orcs disabled or killed by the magic was only about 12 of them. As the combat got into melee phase, they couldn't use magic anymore as they could put their side in danger.

The battle of Mercenaries and Orcs were very bloody and intense.

A mercenary had to face two or three Orcs at the same time, but it wasn't a challenge to them. With a small shield and their dodging techniques, they fought well. Though they were outnumbered, they were well experienced so they were capable of this kind of combat.

The Orc Warrior was fighting with three mercenaries. Their swords were shiny, and it meant they can use aura sword. Skilled, experienced mercenaries well faced it, but they could see the mercenaries were losing, pulling back. The Warrior's strength was beyond their capabilities.

As the swords and axes couldn't harm the Warrior's thick skin, the mercenaries were getting exhausted. It was fortunate that most weapons used by the Orcs were clubs. If they were armed just as well as the mercenaries, it would hardly be a match at all.

The battle was not going well for the Mercenaries as the time flows. Though they were skilled and experienced, they were heavily outnumbered. They started to get tired and got in danger.

Moreover, some of the orcs were heading towards them. The mercenaries tried their best to attract their attention, but it was getting harder and harder.

"Boss, Are we gonna just stand here and watch the fight?"

Ritrina's voice was shaking. Not because she was afraid, but she was excited to madness seeing bloody combat. She indeed is a true berserker.

"If we hesitate any longer, there will be no chance for them, Boss!"

Cool head Philip too seemed worried about the situation. He held his sword too tight that his hands went pale. As Haroon looked back, he could see Gitan shaking hard, tightly holding the shield. Serinn seemed frightened too. She was hugging herself and was not looking at the battlefield.

"You two, stay here. Philip, Ritrina, let's go!"

As soon as he spoke, they ran into the battlefield. Haroon also ran, but not toward the battlefield. He headed to the carts and climbed up one of them.

"Who are you?"

Middle aged magician asked him. She was watching over the battlefield with worry in her face. As she saw some strangers joining the battle and assisting Humans, she wasn't too much surprised by his sudden appearance.

"I'm Haroon from the Gust of Winds Mercenaries. We were just passing by, and we saw the situation not going very well."

"Thank you. I'm Meilan, the vice-leader of Rotem Mercenaries. But why are you here...?"

Without any reply, he took out the throwing knife from his belt. The targets were 20 steps away. He didn't need to use any active skill for that. The training duration may be short, but he has practiced through the pain of getting blisters and it being broken. And for some reason, he found that he was good at throwing knives.

A knife cut the air and flew into the middle of the battleground and struck in the back of the orc's head which was about to attack a Mercenary's vulnerable back, who was pulling his sword deeply stuck in an Orc's side. The mercenary found Haroon and smiled back to thank him, then threw himself at another orc.

Ritrina has killed two orcs with her sharp and quick blade and found herself surrounded by three orcs before she knew it. At first, she was too excited about the situation, then he got pushed by their weapons and fell right on her rear ends. One of them lifted its shabby, rusty ax high up in the air. Its felonious face came into her eyes, and she recovered her consciousness and realized how frightening it was. She shut her eye tightly. Then, she could hear something fast cutting through the air.

Oddly, the scream coming into her ears were not hers. It was the orc's. She opened her eyes and she could see a handle of a dagger sticking out of the orc's head. The other two orcs were looking around to check where the dagger came from.

Ritrina stood up with great haste and found Haroon throwing another knife in the other direction. She chased the knife and at the end of the trace, there was Philip surrounded by another three orcs, and one of it had a dagger stuck in its back of the head.

'Our Boss is behind us!'

An expert of throwing knives, Boss Haroon was fighting with them. When she realized

that, she could recover her fighting spirit, and came back from the fear.

“How dare you dirty buggers attack me? Take the sword of Justice!”

Her sword was swinging into the side of another orc, which was still looking for the origin of a throwing knife.

Haroon's knives gave another help to a mercenary which was a step away from her head to be chopped off. For this time, he threw two knives at once and pierce the necks of orc; one in front of the mercenary, and one in the back of him. She pushed the dead orcs' body away and faced Haroon. She moved her fingers on her lips to thank Haroon.

The battlefield was getting stabilized. More orcs were being fallen, and they were losing the momentum they had in the early stage of the battle.

When they taugt they heard something windy, the orc next to it got killed, or got severe wound. The orcs could not focus on their opponent.

The tide has turned, and Haroon played a big role in it. Haroon positioned himself on the tallest cart, and threw knives or daggers to protect the mercenaries in need. Merchants and labor workers exclaimed whenever Haroon throws knives, but Haroon couldn't hear those as he was too focused on the battlefield.



The Orc Warrior was having frustrating moment defending continuous attacks by the three mercenaries. And eventually, one of them retreat back slowly as he couldn't keep up the pace anymore. The Orc Warrior saw this as the chance, and swung its club heavily on that Mercenary, giving an intense glare at him.

The club and the sword hit against each other, and unbelievably large crashing sound burst out from the impact.

Particularly scary-looking mercenary stumbled because of the aftershock, and tried to recover and fight back, and it looked very risky.

Haroon threw a dagger.

As throwing knives have shorter blade length than the daggers, it seemed throwing

knives will barely do any damage to the Orc Warrior, which has much larger and tougher body. Daggers should pierce deeper.

Though it may have a larger body, it was faster than the ordinary orcs, so when it saw the dagger, it avoided the dagger hitting his neck, but it couldn't avoid the dagger to hit its shoulder deeply.

The warrior cried in the pain, and still intensely looked around as if it were going to destroy the entire battlefield. Then he got enraged, and roared.

"Kuaargh! Cheiik!"

And as if it was considered as a boss monster, the debuff 'Fear' affected the battlefield. Not only the mercenaries near the Orc Warrior but every mercenary in the battlefield were slowed down for a bit and it made them hesitate to make the next move.

"Everyone, Get yourself! Don't forget there are throwing weaponry users to assist you, so fight just as you did!" Meilan shouted.

That helped the mercenaries to recover from the debuff. As the battlefield was once settled again with Haroon's assistance, Philip killed another orc and charged at the Warrior.

"Damn it! I am spent!"

He was a bit late to realize that he threw every one of 20 throwing knives and daggers that he received from the Mercenary Academy. There were some throwing knives he received from Sevona, but he forgot that he put those in the arm sleeves.

At least, he had a shuriken in his inventory, but he only has been using sword-shaped weapons, not a star shaped one. He couldn't ensure the accuracy of throwing it.

"Anyone has throwing weapons? Quick!"

It wasn't Haroon. One of the merchants noticed the situation and hurriedly shouted to other merchants and labor workers. Mercenaries didn't know Haroon has turned the tide, but the others who were not fighting saw the bigger picture. Haroon has never missed his target.

“Here, take this!”

“I’ve got one too! Mine’s a short sword!”

As merchants and labor workers are always exposed to various dangers, they always brought dagger or short sword, and a few throwing knives with them. In a matter of a second, throwing weapons and daggers tacked up on the cart.

“Oh no! Norden’s in danger!”

Haroon heard Meilan’s cry and turned his head. He found a young mercenary surrounded by 5 orcs. He’s been fighting well with his brilliant sword skill, but he was outnumbered. One of his arms was dangling as if his shoulder was injured. The chainmail was stained in blood too.

It was so urgent that Haroon threw three throwing knives consecutively relying on his sense. Fortunately, the knives barely avoided two mercenaries and flew between them, and hit Orc’s heads and necks.

“Whew.”

He didn’t realize he was covered in sweat. When the throwing knives left his hands, he was so nervous that his entire body got cold sweats. The joy of defeating the target with his pure skills spread to every bit of his body as if he was electrified.

“He nailed it!”

“Awesome!”

Some merchants head up and exclaimed before they knew. The others were surprised as well. There was no mistake in Haroon’s throwing knives so far.

As there was no more reinforcement of Orcs and Haroon’s throwing knives were intercepting the Orcs, the battle situation was getting better and better.

Now, there were four mercenaries of sword Experts, including Philip, were fighting the Orc Warrior, and they placed it on the defensive. The Orc Warrior checked the situation of the battlefield, being pushed away by four human’s co-attack. He could see his fellow orcs were falling down, as it couldn’t help them fight with the mercenaries.

– You have obtained an item!

While Haroon was looking for the vulnerable target, when the orc he lastly attacked has finally breathed its last breath, he could hear a familiar voice in his years. If this UI sound didn't exist He would have forgotten that he was playing a VR game.

Normally, the items were dropped on the exact place where the monster died, but Beyond didn't implement that system. The item was obtained directly into the last hitter's inventory.

Haroon was pretty sure that he has killed more than 10 orcs, even not counting the ones he has injured, but it was his first time to hear the UI sound.

'Yes!'

It was the first item he has obtained after he left the Metropolis. Saving people's lives were already an exciting experience, and they were giving him the item for that. But his face was still cold with nervous.

Another throwing knife flew, and another orc stumbling and pumping out its blood. It got hit by a Mercenary's sword, and fell down on the ground. The number of orcs was less than half now.

The mercenaries were tired, but they encouraged each other to press the Orcs, and Haroon wasn't throwing his weapons to protect anymore but to attack together. In the beginning of the battle, there were too many orcs that one mercenary had to face, but now, too many orcs have died that they had enough time to help each other, which was the strength that mercenaries gain as they train together.

Encouraged mercenaries' pace was very frightening. Like how a wild fire eats up the dry reed field, the number of orcs falling down increased gradually.

The Orc Warrior was busy enough to defend four people's attack, and it was even more challenging when it had a throwing knife stuck in its shoulder. He got anxious about the situation and screamed as loud as it can which almost burst out the ear drum of the mercenaries. Then when they were disoriented by the sound, it parried four swords away and hastily escaped the battlefield.

When the mercenaries were recovered, the Orc Warrior stared Haroon once from the distance and ran away like a zephyr.

“Chase them! ‘Till the distance of 50 steps. Don’t hesitate to come back when you leave the area.”

Someone shouted, but Mercenaries were already throwing their weapons at the back of the Orcs running away. There were no easy targets like giant monsters running away.

It was that moment. A dagger left Haroon’s hand with the insane amount of speed, at the Orc Warrior that they only could see barely between the trees.

Cutting through the air, making loud noises that one won’t believe it is from a dagger, it flew between the trees, like a fish swimming in the ocean. It was avoiding the trees, humans, and orcs. Strangely enough, there was a blue light shining at the end of it, and it drew the way the dagger traveled.

Some of the mercenaries who’s been chasing the orcs, the merchants and labor workers, most of the ones in the battlefield tried to track the trajectory of the dagger. It caught the attention of them as they never heard nor seen any types of throwing weapons to change direction mid-air.

At the end, they could hear an Orc’s scream.

“It hit! It hit the Orc Warrior! The Orc Warrior has fallen!”

The mercenaries stopped where they stood. It was the Orc Warrior that four sword experts had to struggle to deal with. It was the Orc Warrior that is famous being able to slay an Ogre if there is three of them. But Haroon has killed it with throwing weapons, using only one.

“Let’s check!” Said Hay’al, the oldest and most experienced Mercenary among the group.

The mercenaries head to where the Orc Warrior has fallen. They had no more interest in orcs running away from the battlefield.

“Dang!”

“It’s really dead!”

“It went through the ears, and scrambled the brain.”

They found the dagger stuck in the tree next to it. It was still vibrating. The Orc Warrior was pumping its blood through the every hole in his body, and it was still breathing, but the convulsion of it was getting weaker and weaker.

“How far do you think it was?”

An old man climbed up a cart and asked the magician standing next to Meilan.

“At least 50 or even more than 60 steps.”

“This young one is, indeed, a monster.”

The old man couldn't hide his admiration in his eyes.

“This... This is almost terrifying.”

“Was it really a throwing weapon that killed it?”

The mercenaries watching it dying were more frightened than when they were fighting with the Orcs. They have just witnessed a throwing skill that avoids impediments and precisely penetrating the target from that far distance.

“We might be with a legendary man now.”

“I can't believe even I saw it with my bare eyes. I never thought someone could kill an Orc Warrior with a throwing weapon.”

The mercenaries couldn't continue.

Suddenly, Haroon's body suddenly got stiff and fall down from the rooftop of the cart while everybody was looking at him. Serinn and Ritrina screamed, and ran at him.



As the orcs were defeated, the merchants became lively once again. Even though there was no extra news from the Mercenary leader and others, but there couldn't be happier news than no sacrifice was made killing more than 100 Orcs and an Orc Warrior.

Haroon, who contributed most in the battle, has lost his consciousness and was lying in one place. At least, his life was safe, said Meilan.

The mercenaries naturally found their work to do. Some were skinning the Orcs, some were uncovering the clothes that covered eyes and noses of horses to prevent them from getting frightened by the battle. It was a short time, but there was no distinction between the Merchants and Mercenaries.

It was in the late afternoon, almost at dinner time when Haroon woke up. But his consciousness was not back totally. He remembered hearing some UI sound that alerted him the death of the Warrior, and some other UI sounds as well, but that was the end of his memory.

Then he realized that he was unconsciousness for a while, and he wanted to open his eyes to see the situation, but he couldn't. Somebody was talking to each other. Not far from where he was lying down.

"By the way, grandpa, is his throwing weapon that awesome? I heard some say he might be a legend somewhere."

Haroon could hear a kid's voice, and he found out that he was talking with an aged man. They were talking about him. He got curious what they would talk about him, so he decided not to open his eyes.

"Indeed, it is something awesome. After all, those knives and daggers are light enough to be thrown by hands, but it loses its power when the target is more than 20 steps away."

"Huh? But that Warrior was at least 50 steps away."

"He must have put some mana in the dagger or some unknown force. Or else, that distance cannot be covered."

Listening to the voice, Haroon realized this aged man is quite old.

"Then could he really be a Legend? I heard the mercenaries say they've never seen someone who could kill the Warrior by a throwing weapon. Whoa, he is AWESOME."

"Hmm, when I do agree with that he is awesome..."

As if the kid noticed something odd from his voice, the kid asked once again.

"What's the matter, grandpa? It is awesome at his age, innit?"

"It is. But he is impulsive, and he's still immature."

“Huh? What do you mean?”

Haroon almost wide opened his eyes. ‘But I’ve just killed an Orc Warrior, that even 4 sword experts couldn’t defeat, and you call me impulsive and immature for that? You have no idea how hard I fought,’ he thought. He got upset and angry at the old man.

“If the warrior wasn’t exhausted by the mercenaries continuous attack, and if the warrior wasn’t running away from the battlefield, the Warrior would have never died from that attack. No orcs, neither any human would have expected the throwing knife to reach from that far distance. This means that the Warrior was in a defenseless state when it got killed.”

“But it is still cool that he killed the Warrior.”

“While that’s very true, he didn’t need to. Especially not when he had to use every bit of his power. Moreover, he threw that dagger without making sure that his friends will protect him when he loses his consciousness. This only meant he was either greedy about the fame, or he couldn’t resist his hot blood. What if he had his personal enemy nearby? What if the orcs came back with a reinforcement?”

“B-but, it didn’t and it was cool! Everyone is looking him differently.”

The kid seemed uncomfortable by the Old man’s disagreement. He complained with an upset voice as the old man was criticizing his new idol.

But that wise words were the chills going down Haroon’s spine, and he got goose-bumps all over. Just as the Old man said, if there was anyone who had bad personal feelings on Haroon, he was very vulnerable to them.

“That’s why I’m saying he is immature. To survive in this cruel world, one needs to hide one’s own strength. Not only the people with weapons but ordinary people as well.

“Why?”

“It might look cool at the moment, but mercenaries are originally ignorant, and violent people. This meant being ‘cool’ can be one’s weakness. Back in my days, when there was no concept of guilds, it was quite regular to see how mercenaries suddenly change into the bandits on their escort. There are some, still. To not to get betrayed, and live wisely, one needs to hide their own strength.

Haroon was embarrassed. He was embarrassed that he got way too much excited to lose control of himself killing the orcs. He even determined not to get full of conceit.

“Look what those fellows are doing. They’ve just skinned the Warrior and put that in their bags. I can assure you they won’t even come back to thank him when he wakes up.”

“How can you tell?”

“One gains eyes for people with my age, my boy. It is best not to even think of helping those bastards. They’ve never come here to check how fine this young one is. They would even try to fight him for the Warrior’s skin. They’ve seen all of his cards already, and people fear what they don’t see. If they’ve seen it all, what is there more to be afraid of? Throwing weapons are most effective when it is used in the darkness. Therefore, Sword Experts, like them, won’t be afraid of throwing weapons.”

“But I still admire him. You can’t deny that he is strong enough to kill a Warrior.”

“Hyuh-hyuh-hyuh! Yes, he is strong. But the one that survives until the end, that’s the one we call the real strong one. And to survive, one needs fortune, and solid bases.”

And they continued for a while and left the place.

‘Damn me, why am I so careless? He was totally right! It wasn’t necessary to kill the Orc Warrior when it was running away. And I have shown my limit as well, so if there was any enemy nearby, I would have been dead.’

Late regret made him suffer. He realized his body wasn’t moving. It seemed his body was in the worst state possible.

‘I won’t do such stupid thing ever again. As the old man said, the real strong one is who survives until the end.’

He blamed himself for a while, then opened his eyes when his mind was finally at calm.

“He waked up! He is awake!”

A little girl noticed him and gladly shouted. The Quad Wankers heard her voice and made to him with haste.

“Boss, are you all right?”

Haroon could see Gitan, Serinn, Ritrina, and Philip worried about him. He felt guilty about it as he was deceiving them.

“What happened?” Haroon asked.

Of course, he knew what happened. But asked Philip to act as if he just woke up.

“Nothing really. You just have killed the Warrior and fell unconsciousness.”

“Mm...”

Haroon raised his upper body up. Then he could see he was lying next to Doran’s cart.

Some mercenaries heard he is awake, and came to thank him for saving their lives. Just as the old man said, some mercenaries didn’t come at all.

Soon, Meilan came with a mercenary to see Haroon.

“You are awake. Don’t worry about your situation. Your body is just exhausted.”

“Sorry for the trouble.”

“No, don’t be. We were worried about you as you fell down like that after helping us. Your mercenaries told me that you have used an elemental power. It was a relief to know that you fell down because you have spent all your mana. Oh right, and this is my brother Tain, the leader of Rotem Mercenaries,

The man next to Merilan seemed middle-aged. Like her, he had a clear-cut face, and he had a profound atmosphere. He seemed more like a knight rather than a mercenary.

If he remembered correctly, he hasn’t seen Tain on the battlefield. Despite what he saw, his chainmail was quite in a mass. It meant he has gone through a serious battle too. Though, it doesn’t seem he was hurt.

“I heard from your man that you are only a grade D mercenary, and I heard you did amazing work today. Is it Haroon, again?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Though the Warrior may be running away, exhausted, I heard you killed the Warrior with a dagger using the elemental power. I have never heard of such a skill.”

Haroon knew he was complementing, but he couldn’t say anything. What about killing a warrior, if he needs to fell unconsciousness for a half of the day. His face was turned red.

“I was just lucky.”

Tain held Haroon's hands and pat it for few times.

"No. If what I heard is right, it wasn't just a luck. I had to lure the portion of orcs away from the battlefield because there were simply too many. So I couldn't witness your skill with my very own eyes, but if what I heard is right, that is a really amazing skill."

"Thank you, but I just wasn't myself. If you told me to do it now, I wouldn't be able to."

Like the old man said, he decided to hide his capability.

"I'm pretty sure this will be a legend of the mercenary history. It was very fresh, and surprising attempt. Not to mention how you could put the power of the spirits in the throwing weapons. If you acquire that skill, I can't imagine how much you could improve."

"I can't remember how I did it myself."

Haroon said it as sadly as possible. Though, Tain seemed he understand what he said.

"I see. That moment doesn't come anytime, young man. Moreover, I imagine you were in a trance. I heard some does experience that moment. To feel that moment again, you will need to put lots of effort. Who knows? If you can remember what you did in that moment, it may be your own skill. Anyway, I really thank you and your friends."

The people around him seemed satisfied to know what really happened to Haroon.

Haroon thought it would be great if what Tain said was true. But what really happened was that Brat has acted by its own mind. Haroon could roughly remember that he felt all of his power being sucked out from him. It wasn't like how Brat worked on the graduation day.

"Well, take some rest, and don't be too anxious. If you can practice with patience, maybe you could acquire a skill that could be a legendary one," said Tain.

"Yes, you need to take some rest. Anyway, I really appreciate your help, thanks to you, no single sacrifice was made in this battle. Thanks."

Meilan seemed very grateful to him. Though she may be experienced, she was feeling nervous on the battle. If it wasn't Haroon, she knew many sacrifices would have been made.

After Tain and Meilan went away, a few more mercenaries came to him to thank him.

“Seeing that his face is still pale, I don’t think he is well yet. Let’s leave him alone so he can rest well,” said Philip.

The Quad wankers and others went to a different area so Haroon can rest well. Just as Philip said, his face was pale as a white paper, and his eyes were very dull too.

Haroon ate the soup a merchant gave him to relieve the hunger and closed his eyes leaning on the wheel of the cart. His stamina and health point were so low that he had to struggle to move his own body.

‘Only if I had a class, I would have leveled up, restoring all the health and mana.’

that reminded him how wasteful killing the Warrior is. Since he was the one who lastly hit the Warrior, he would have leveled up a few times.

‘Doesn’t this game has a force-disconnection system? If it was that dangerous to make me fell unconsciousness, not only the system but still Bell would have disconnected the connection. Then wasn’t it that dangerous?’

Haroon decided to ask Bell later, and he remembered something.

‘I think I heard something before I fell unconsciousness.

Haroon opened his status window and checked H.P, M.P, and E.F.P.

Name: Haroon

Race: Human

Class: –

Level: 10

Title: Orc Warrior Slayer (and 2 other)

H.P.:30

M.P.:5

E.F.P:1

“Holy shit!”

His H.P. was originally a little bit less than 500. All his H.P. and M.P. was gone. Especially, E.F.P. was at 1. The other stats were crawling on the bottom as well, but at least he gained 5 S.P.

‘...Come to think of it, did I told Brat to use the skill?’

He couldn’t remember ordering Brat to use the skill ‘Spirit-guided throwing knives’. Moreover, that skill was way too weak to kill the Orc Warrior.

‘That’s strange. And I don’t believe Brat would have worked on its own mind without my order.’

He couldn’t understand no matter how much he thinks about it. He wanted to ask Brat, but he wouldn’t be able to summon it now. If it goes wrong, he will die from lacking mana.

‘And I remember hearing some UI sounds too.’

Haroon checked his inventory. There were two new items. A small stone that has creates strange atmosphere and a short sword that was about 50cm long. Haroon took out those items and checked the info of it.

Mana Stone (misc)

Class: Uncommon+

Some monsters gain strength and intelligence to rule the others by eating mana stones. These mana stones can grow larger in the body, and you can acquire these mana stones by hunting those mutated monsters. It stores denser mana, and filling or extracting mana from the stone is way faster than those stones mined in nature. These types of mana stones are very valuable to Magicians.

‘This is amazing!’

Haroon shouted, into his mind. It wasn’t something that you would expect to get hunting down the orcs.

Haroon checked the other one as well.

Short Sword

Class: Uncommon

durability: 60/60

Attack damage: 30~35

Requirement: –

Can be used for slashing and throwing. It has a great cutting force and attack damage. Seems made by a great Meister.

He needed this kind of weapon. The short swords he had was about 20cm long and they were too light to be capable of long-range throwing. If he has at least one of these weapons, it would be great for an emergency situation.

‘The orcs have given me great items beyond my expectation.’

Though his body may be in the worst state, he felt proud of the result of battle. He decided to check his skill window as well.

“Skill window!”

Spirit integrated throwing knives (Intermediate): Lv.1(3.20%)/Lv.5

If the caster has a spirit with enough intelligence, the caster can unite the spirit with a throwing knife to increase the impact of the weapon. The effective range is 50 meters at level 1. It can avoid obstacles and hit the vital point of the target. Uses 50 mana and 10 elemental force point per second.

Just as he thought, there was another skill added. Moreover, it was an intermediate skill, not a basic one. He wasn't sure if it was systemically possible to obtain an intermediate one, but he smiled ear to ear.

Haroon read it over and over again, enjoying the mood. Then one sentence came into his eyes.

‘50 mana per second? Damn, so that's why!’

Haroon finally found out why he passed out.

The effective range of throwing weapons are up to 30~40 meter if it was thrown by pure strength. If one uses their mana, effective range might increase, but the precision drops gradually. Therefore, an intelligent spirit, which was Brat, the essential spirit, in this case, must have integrated with the dagger to hit the Warrior, avoiding the obstacles.

‘And I feel so tired.’

Even he has been unconsciousness for a half of day, he still felt sleepy. His low health and low mana made him sleep.



Haroon woke up again in the middle of the night. He could see the Quad Wankers guarding him. They were resting, sitting up and leaning their head on the side of the cart. They could have set up the tents and get some sleep, but for some reason, they chose not to.

He again felt guilty, thinking he doesn't deserve this much care. He's been looking them with mixed feelings and met eyes with Serinn.

“Boss, you woke up,” said Serinn.

Philip heard her and faced Haroon.

“Oh, you are awake. Here. Drink these.”

Philip took something out from his pocket. It was two small glass bottle with caps on.

“Well... I forgot these when you woke up last time. There were some health and mana potions among the items Tain gave us.

‘And NOW you are giving me these.’

Haroon felt angry, but who was he to blame? As Bell said, the potions existed in this world that restores mana and health over time. He took the bottles and checked the labels. It was written ‘low class’.

‘But that’s still something.’

Low-class potions cost 50 silver in the Magicka shops, whereas the ones that the Temples sell costs 3 gold per one. It is valued highly for its rarity as mana potions are used by the magicians. Also, it was hard to obtain the material used to make it: Troll’s blood.

As he drank them, the mana slowly regenerated. He could feel the energy being restored in his body. Soon, he felt his body as light as feathers as if he took a long rest.

“Thank you for caring me,” said Haroon.

“Hehe, don’t mention it. If it wasn’t you, Boss, I would have been slain by the dirty orcs.”

“You have saved my life, too. I can’t remember what exactly I did, but I remember that my beautiful face wasn’t cut away by the orcs’ rusty swords all thanks to those throwing knives.”

Serinn and Ritrina were smiling at him to thank him. Philip and Gitan put their thumbs up to congratulate Haroon’s achievement.

They couldn’t sleep like that, so the Quad Wankers left the place and set up the tents. The night deepened, and Haroon was the only one awake from the party. He couldn’t sleep as he slept for a long time, and he still wasn’t awake from the excitement of his first large-scale battle.

Chapter 7

The story quest

After making sure that the surroundings are quiet, Haroon summoned Brat on standby stage. Haroon wanted to know what happened before he fainted.

- “Hey, Brat.”
- “What is it, Mas? I’m so tired.”

He didn’t expect him to be kind, but its voice was quite gruff. Though, he could feel that it is tired, so he decided not to be angry at it.

- “You? Tired? I could have died because of you.”
- “That’s my words. Because of your greed, I had to spend every ounce of my strength, and I can barely move now!”
- “Just, forget it. I’ve got a question for you.”

Haroon decided to stop there and decided to ask that he has been wondering about.

- “What is it? Make it quick. I need to sleep more to restore my strength.”

It was trying to start up the fight again, but Haroon patiently asked the question.

- “Did I order you to kill the Warrior? I just don’t remember doing so.”
- “Not by words, but you desired with all your heart: that you want to kill the Warrior. So I had to use all your pathetically low mana and elemental force AND health, but it wasn’t enough so I had to use all of MY mana and elemental force to reach the god damn Warrior!”

So that was why. Its words were arrogant and bratty, but it couldn’t lie because it was a spirit. Now that it mention it, he did remember desiring it with all his heart.

- “Alright. Just, don’t do whatever before I say so. The human mind is quite impulsive and could be regrettable when it was turned into the action.
- “Ay, ay. I’ll remember that word perfectly well. That makes my life easier. Also, my

level and stat have dropped quite much, so feed me good things.

– “Got it. Rest well, then.”

Brat went back to rest, hearing its master’s first kind words.

Maybe the reason that he’s acquired an intermediate skill skipping mastering the basic one is Brat’s amazing capability. If that’s the case, Brat’s stat must have dropped by a big amount.

‘I’ll have to get an item with full of mana for Brat.’

It was when Haroon was standing up, determining his mind. Someone was moving in Devron’s cart. Devron’s cart was covered in a leather tent like other carts, and he saw it through a small gap.

‘Huh? Who is it at this hour?’

It was that moment. With a siren sound with a familiar voice, a small window was displayed in front of him.

– You have received a story quest

Story Quest – Serial quest

Escort the V.I.P.

Difficulty level: D

A V.I.P is moving along with the merchants. She was hidden away as a child so that she will be protected. She may be a 14 years old, young girl, but her true identity is very surprising. People who want harm of her has found her, and grown larger so protecting her became harder. Expect dangers, and assist her with all you’ve got.

Rewards: Major increasement of stat Luck, +300 Fame, +30 S.P. The V.I.P. might give you a special reward upon the arrival of the viscounty’s estate.

Warning: Failing the quest decreases your fame, and decreases chance to get new quests.

‘Level D quest is quite high in other games. It is labeled as a story quest, is that why?’

He wasn’t sure about the quest system in Beyond. Usually, F was the lowest difficulty. Quests with difficulty level of D was usually very hard, and it needed to proceed carefully as a group.

30 Soul Points and the increase of Luck did interest him, but he found the second reward very suspicious. The V.I.P. ‘Might’ give him a special reward? In other words, it also meant the V.I.P. might not give him a special reward. He doubted if that kind of reward can exist.

But still, it was the quest that the system of Beyond has given him by itself, not by an NPC. He was tempted by the fact the quest was a serial quest, and that it is a story quest. Moreover, he was just assisting the escort, so the rate of success was quite high. He wasn’t sure, but he thought this might be a good favor.

‘This is the first quest on my first journey. I’ve got a good feeling about this. I’ll do my best on this.’

– You have accepted the quest.

‘So that person must be the V.I.P.’

Obviously, the quest was given to him when he saw the silhouette in the cart.

‘Then I guess we will accompany with them for a while.’

He thought it wouldn’t be so hard. As he and the Quad Wanker impressed Tain by showing an excellent performance on the battle, he imagined that Tain would actually want them to accompany them.

Haroon wasn’t sleepy as he has been sleeping for a long time in the day, and because of the excitement of receiving the quest, he shut his eyes and tried to get some sleep.



Just as he thought, Tain and Meilan visited him early in the morning.

“We found that this journey is way more dangerous than we thought. Unlike the last

time we took this path, we are having battles with monsters almost every day. 3 has died already, and more are injured. We even hired 10 wandering mercenaries, but I am still not certain of the safety to Viscounty Parson with current 25 members.

“Won’t you go with us, Haroon? I really like your members as they seem good and educated. The merchants don’t like our members as they are quite... wild,” Meilan added.

The situation went as Haroon favored, but he hid his joy and acted as if he was going to refuse it, and agreed to accompany them to Viscounty of Parson. Daily pay was offered at 3 gold. Haroon stole a glance at Philip, who seemed little bit astonished, and learned that they were not paying cheap.

“Boy, That’s reassuring. Your skills are above our average. Then, please guard those two carts. This is Devron. I have an acquaintance with him for some time now. And this is Doran. He’s traveling to his hometown with his two kids. Please take good care of them. The kids are scared of our mercenaries. Devron, Doran. This is mercenary Haroon. He will be escorting you to the Viscounty of Parson.”

It will take about 4 days to Viscounty of Parson. Tain paid Haroon 6 gold in advance. Haroon put in his pocket without hesitation, and when with the Quad Wankers, they went to meet the owners of the carts.

“The name’s Haroon, the leader of Mercenaries of Gust of Wind. This is Philip, Gitan, Serinn, and Ritrina, the members of the guild. We will be accompanying you to the Viscounty of Parson.”

“Nice to meet you. I’ve seen your skills in the battle. My name is Devron.”

Haroon recognized that voice. It was the voice of the old man who gave advice indirectly. His face was tanned, wrinkled with age, and was emotionless like a mask.

“I am Doran, and these are my kids, Sepher, and Sepia. Thank you for escorting us. Sepher likes you very much, Mr. Haroon.”

Doran seemed late 30s. He had very kind impression and politeness, which one wouldn’t expect from the merchants. Red-faced boy standing next to him seemed about 10 years old. The boy was watching Haroon with admiration. And the girl standing next to the boy was grasping her brother’s pants. She seemed about 2 years

younger than the boy. She had a cute smile with dimple and big eyes.

Though it should be Devron and Doran who should be welcoming them, it was actually the Quad Wankers who welcomed the situation. It was because Doran has volunteered to prepare the meals.

Haroon and his members were surprised to taste Doran's soup.

"Boy, That's the soup I am talking about!"

Gitan's eyes lost focus tasting the soup.

"I've never had such delicious soup. I almost feel sad that this bowl isn't bottomless."

"The texture and the smell of fresh mush are driving me crazy!"

Opposed to Philip who likes to save words, Serinn and Ritrina were going crazy for Doran's soup as they've been almost starving for last few days. Not to mention Gitan who likes to eat.

"Boss, this is what we call 'food', isn't it."

"I think the same, Philip."

Thanks to Serinn and Doran, they learned that foods are one of the things that are required to be happy.

The Haroon and the members went to Doran's cart to thank him for the good foods. Sepher and Sepia heard Haroon's voice before Doran could, and ran down from the box seat, where they were sitting with Doran.

"Thank you for the delicious soup. We couldn't have rested this well without your soup, Doran."

"Haha, don't mention it. My kids have been worrying about you. It's my pleasure that you've recovered well," said Doran.

In the middle of talking, he faced away from Haroon and saw his kids carrying something heavy from the cart and tried to help them. But the kids were faster.

“Haroon, here!”

“I’ve got some too!”

They were hugging quite large sacks and it seemed heavy for the kids. Though it was hard for them to hand Haroon the sacks, their face was still bright. Haroon received first so kids won’t need to carry the sacks.

“What are these?”

“Hehe! Why, it’s your throwing weapons. My dad and the other adults collected these. And we made them clean!”

Haroon checked inside of the bag. Just as Sepher said, lots of cleaned throwing knives were neatly stacked up.

“Oh, Sepher, Sepia, that’s so generous of you. I thought they were lost, and you’ve found me such my precious items!”

Haroon smiled back to them. Their innocent eyes were full of joy.

“Doran, thank you very much.”

And Haroon had to thank him too.

“It’s not much. It was a little thing we could do to say thank you for saving our lives. Not only me and my kids, but every merchants and labor workers have collected them.”

In fact, Haroon thought about the throwing knives several times. He didn’t really need them, but it was true that he felt empty without it. Gladly, Haroon started to stack them in his belt. Then he realized he doesn’t recognize some of them.

“I don’t think these are mine...?”

Doran overheard it from the distance.

“Consider it as our gift. It is another small thing that we could do for you.”

Unlike the throwing knives set that the throwing weapon trainer has given him, the size and weight varied very much. Which might be a little inconvenience for him, but Haroon gladly accepted it. Some of it even had a few jewelry decorated. Opposed to what Doran said, these were a little bit too much to receive as a gift.

But Haroon decided to gladly receive them. After all, he was a mercenary who is hired to protect them. If he can protect the merchants with these weapons, he thought, he would gladly receive them as well.

He rearranged his crossbelt with his own throwing weapons and new weapons which had similar sizes, shapes, and weight. He put away the rest of them in the sack and stored in his inventory.

Haroon felt reassured by feeling the weight from his crossbelt. He felt grown up once again. There weren't any statistical change in his stats, but it was his mind. So he felt proud of it.

Then he realized it wasn't the throwing weapons that made him feel proud of himself. In Beyond, he was living a valuable life where other people can rely their lives on him, unlike how he was living a meaningless life in the real world as an incompetent person. And this is why he was feeling proud of himself.

Chapter 8

Brat's superb performance

It was on their third morning since Haroon and his members joined Rotem Mercenaries' party. They will be able to arrive the viscounty of Parson the very next day, and the contract will be over. They've encountered a few number of orcs and goblins but they weren't any problem to the party as Haroon has joined them.

As the Rotem Mercenaries were still recovering from the injuries of last battle with the orcs, the Gust of Winds had to face these small group of orcs or goblins. But Haroon had no objections since the Quad Wankers needed more experience. Using the encounters as chance, Haroon made the Quad Wankers to practice their teamwork.

Haroon was training with the Quad Wankers. It was very early morning, and there was someone who visited Haroon. It was Doran. He and Devron were very interested in the Gust of Winds seeing how they have been sincere to the training and won't hesitate to take charge in battle.

"Haroon, I've got some affair to talk with you."

"Why, you've got all my ears."

"Then, *Ehem.*"

With his eyes, he signaled Haroon to sit on the box seat of his cart. That was the seat his kids sit. Haroon could see they were at Devron's cart. Haroon noticed Doran was being cautious for some reason. Haroon silently nodded and sat next to him.

"May I ask a favor?"

"I am listening."

Doran always has treated Haroon politely. Moreover, he was preparing food for the Gust of Winds, so Haroon wanted to help him if he can.

“As planned, we will be arriving the castle of viscount tomorrow. But I and Devron are planning to quit this party.”

“Oh, and why is that?”

He wasn't able to expect anything at this point. Is this how the quest is supposed to be? or did something has happened to the V.I.P? Even though he didn't know about the details, he could see that Doran, also, is related with the V.I.P. as Devron is.

“This journey so far was strangely dangerous, unlike the other times. The path we took was supposed to be safest compared to other paths. But oddly enough, we've already encountered more monsters than we were supposed to in the whole journey. Moreover, if it weren't you and your members, I can't imagine what would have happened to us in the battle 3 days ago.”

Haroon didn't have anything to say about it as he was just a newbie mercenary.

“The members of the Rotem Mercenaries are not united yet. Devron's view on this is that it would be risky to let Rotem Mercenaries escort us, not in this state. I think the same.”

That's a news to Haroon. Haroon didn't see any conflict between the Rotem members.

“So Devron and I were thinking of moving as a smaller group. We were planning to hire a pathfinder and a small number of mercenaries. Let me be honest with you. He and I are not merchants and our only concern is to arrive Viscounty of Paros safely. We have another 14 years old girl riding on his cart. She is Devron's niece, Briella, and she needs to get to the Viscounty of Paros on an urgent matter.”

It was at this moment when Haroon could hear a UI sound and a new quest window was opened.

[You have received a quest]

Escort Devron party to Viscounty of Paros

Devron and his party couldn't trust Rotem Mercenaries anymore. And somehow, they fount out some kind of danger is impending on the merchants party. Escort the girl, Devron's relative, to Viscounty of Paros.

Reward: +200 Fame, 100 Gold in cash, Briella's present(?)

Failing the quest decreases your fame by 200 and gradually decreases chance to get new quests.

Haroon now sure that the girl she mentioned is the main character of the story quest, but he needed to check things further.

"Oh! I had no idea there was another person in the cart. What is going on?"

"Oh, nothing. She has a poor health and it's a bit sensitive talk."

Doran hesitated to talk further.

"I see. And how about these goods?"

"We will get rid of non-necessary things. As we are giving up our business, we'll sell our carts as well."

He had no idea that multiple quests can be overlapped, and the situation was going in his favor as he could proceed the story quest as well. Smiling inside with satisfaction, Haroon accepted the quest.

"It's a deal. First, I have to thank you for appreciating our ability. It is fortunate that I only agreed to escort the merchants to the viscounty of Parson. There won't be any conflict with Rotem Mercenaries."

[You have accepted the quest]

"Thank you very much. If it is you, we are relieved."

Doran smiled brightly and gave a signal to Devron who was watching them over the shoulder from his cart. The old man nodded.



Nothing happened in the morning. It was a short, 3 day trip with the Rotem Mercenaries, but it was long enough to make Gitan and Sepher friends. Sepia also got

two new friends, Serinn and Ritrina, and they got friendly enough to talk whisper to whisper.

Unlike how Haroon was traveling only with the Quad Wankers... Haroon couldn't think of a good word to describe it. What to say, he felt the situation was very kind and warm, so he didn't bully the Quad Wankers anymore.

But is it because a good time passes quicker than the other times? Or is it because there is always a calm before the storm? The merchants had to stop because of the urgent news from the scouts.

"Boss! BOSS!"

A cloud of dust was created by the footsteps of the scout who were running toward them. No one told the party to stop, but the scout's urgent voice made everyone stop just in a moment. The merchants knew the scout, and he wasn't a mercenary who would shout. He always accomplished his task sincerely and quietly.

"Philip, go and see what's going on." "Gotcha, Boss."

"Gotcha, Boss."

The oldest of the quad wankers, and the model mercenary of the guild head to the head of the merchants with haste.

"I hope it is not something bad. Like we thought, this journey is oddly dangerous."

It was Doran. He was hugging his two kids with a nervous look on his face. Doran was looking at the top of the hill, which seemed quite steep.

"Is it the orcs, again?" asked Devron, walking toward them.

"As far as I know, there are no monsters living in Dakin hill. There are no valleys nearby, and the forest here doesn't produce edible fruits, which, again, means this place is not appropriate for the monsters to live near..."

Doran replied, tilting his head.

"Well, there is one creature that would still live in that place," Devron suggested.

“You mean Humans?”

“Yes, and if that’s the case, I suspect that they would be the bandits. But what confuses me is that this place is not that far from the Metropolis, thus the bandits won’t dare to stay near here.”

There was one thing Haroon was curious about.

“But why would they bother to rob a small group like this party?” Haroon asked.

“They usually target a small party like this one. They’ve got fewer mercenaries to deal with, and they won’t be risking themselves to get in the trouble as they know this kind of party is not related with big mercenary guilds,” Devron answered him.

It seemed Doran knew it as well. With a nervous look, Doran nodded to agree with Devron’s explanation.

It didn’t take long until Haroon’s heart started to pump very violently. Not because of his fighting spirit before the battle. He just wasn’t sure how he should think of dealing with the bandits, as they are human as well. Haroon knew he was just playing a game, but that didn’t justify killing humans as the game itself was very real.

All the merchants and workers went out of the cart and waited for further direction from Tain. It seemed the leaders were still in the meeting.

Haroon’s party and Devron’s party could see Phin running toward them. His body was quite small compared to other mercenaries, but he was a very experienced mercenary. With clever, fast mind and agile body, he usually took a role of scouting.

“Haroon, you need to attend the meeting.”

“What’s the matter?”

“You better go and hear from them.”

Haroon ran to the front part of the party as Phin hurried him. Except for the ones in overwatch, Mercenaries were waiting for him, standing in an arch shape with Tain and Meilan in the middle.

“Welcome, Haroon. I heard our members had a smoother journey with your help.”

Tain greeted and welcomed him.

“You’ve been a great help in a situation like this,” said Meilan.

She gave Haroon a warm gaze. Was it because she is middle-aged? Her eyes were quite friendly. But why does it look like a shadow was covering her face? Some other mercenaries greeted him with small gestures. Haroon greeted them with his eyes and gave his attention to Tain.

“Alright, I’ll give you a brief explanation of the situation as Haroon joined us. A group of bandits is in the bush in the forest over the heal. We can’t estimate the numbers. The scouts reported that they saw silver wolves. In the worst case of scenario, it can be one group of the Wolf Bandits.”

Lots of the mercenaries went pale when they heard the word ‘Wolf Bandits’.

“Why would the Wolf Bandits even bother to attack a small group like this?”

Somebody questioned, but nobody could answer him. That’s the attacker’s concern, not the prey’s.

“As you may know already, the Wolf Bandits are one of the cruelest ones that annihilates everything that breathes.”

Now it became a giant elephant in the room.

“In a situation like this, there are two options that we can take. Number one, try to conceal our existence and go a long way around and tried to avoid them as much as possible. Of course, they would have their own scouts as well. There is no chance we would completely avoid them. But if they do see us, we may find a good terrain to defend ourselves.”

Some mercenaries shook their heads. Defending was not a good plan when they don’t know the number of enemies.

“Number two, we know they are in the ambush, so we can deploy a small group of us

to attack the ambushed ones and make a surprise attack when things are still in chaos. In this case, we have to assume that there is no other group of ambushed enemy, and we need to take sneaky, but aggressive and effective attack.

Haroon liked the second option. And it seemed the other mercenaries favored it as well. As well as Tain did.

“I can see from your face that you guys support the second option. And it is true that we need to take action first as we have something to protect. So, here is the plan.”

Tain explained his plan, drawing terrain on the ground with a stick.

“This is where we are. Our sides are steep slopes, and there is a hill up ahead. There is grass field over the heal, and ahead of a grass field, there is the forest going uphill once again. This forest is where those bastards have ambushed.”

Then he paused there, looking at the map he drew. He asked Phin.

“Was there any ambush nearby?”

“No, there is nothing at all. With Roam, I have checked both slopes, and there was no sign of the ambush.

Phin’s word had some confidence in it.

“Good, then, free mercenaries and 3 of Haroon’s members will protect the merchants. The others will join the battle. Phin, lead the way and will seek where exactly the ambush is.”

“Got it,” answered Phin.

Phin confidently smiled at the mercenaries.

“Panthus, Orth, and Millon, take your bow and follow Phin.”

“Shit, Bows? Not my favorite, but alright, Boss.”

Panthus seemed not happy about the role. But he followed the orders anyway. Moving his muscular arm and dropping the ax, he took his bow. Two others moved as well

with some kind of rods in their back. It looked like their bows.

“Meilan, obscure their vision as much as possible.”

“Got it. Fog magic should do the trick.”

Meilan gladly agreed to join the battle.

“Haroon, assassinate the bandits with your throwing knives. They must have some sort of signal that we don’t know. Before they get the signal and jump out of the forest, reduce their number as much as possible.”

Haroon nodded, but deeply sighed in the inside. He would not feel the same if it were the monsters, but it was humans this time. Although they may be NPCs and bandits, taking someone’s life was not something he wanted to do. But he knew this was the best choice given, he had to make the choice.

“Got it.”

“Great. The rest will wait for the signal in the grass field. When the squad succeeds their attack and the rest of bandits jump out of the forest, attack with all you’ve got at my signal. Then, prepare to attack now. We’ll have to wait for Phin to eliminate the enemy’s scout. This plan won’t work if we are spotted.”

“Consider it done, boss,” said Phin.

His voice wasn’t loud, but it had strong confidence in it, and it moved some people’s mind.

“But there is something we need to discuss first, Boss Tain.”

“What is it, Philip?”

Philip’s voice was serious enough to stop everyone when they were just about to move.

“We haven’t discussed the right of property of the Warrior’s leather we’ve slain a few days ago. I’ve joined in the middle of the fight, and my Boss has made a final attack. Now that he is fully recovered, let’s make sure of this affair.”

“Hmm, Well?”

Tain cringed his face and everybody could see it. The moment he wanted to avoid eventually came. He asked Jagin first.

“Squad leader Jagin, What’s your view on this?”

“*Khhm*. Well, think about how we get the Warrior, you’ll realize there is no need to discuss how we should divide the leather. We three have fought to our lives to make it almost dead, and he just laid a spoon on it.”

Jagin stared at Philip’s face for a moment, then gave a canny smile.

“He just laid a spoon on it? Do you really mean it? You guys have saved your lives with his throwing knives, and you know I fought with you as well. Whatever condition the Warrior was in, the thing that took its life was my boss’s dagger.”

Philip directly faced Jagin’s stare and added momentum to his words. This model-like dude isn’t only good at his training, but he also had an unyielding spirit to express his own opinion without fearing the opponent.

‘Go to hell, Philip,’ Haroon thought.

He just felt jealous of him. That’s all. It wasn’t like he hates him or something.

“Nonsense! Don’t you know we got in trouble because his dagger enraged it? And we could have got the Warrior on the chase even if the dagger didn’t get it.”

“So you mean you won’t divide any portion of it to us?”

Jagin’s sly smile and words made Philip angry, but Jagin didn’t care about it all all.

“Naturally.”

With that word, Haroon and Philip dropped their jaws. They didn’t expect him to be that flat. Philip’s stare got intense. It seemed almost like he wouldn’t hesitate to draw his sword if things go wrong.

“Huh! This dude just doesn’t get the point. So you will keep 100 gold worth leather all alone?”

“What do you mean alone? There is three of us.”

Haroon held Philip’s shoulder as Philip’s word started to show some blades. Jagin’s words and attitudes were going over the line. Even his guildmates seemed unpleasant of his behavior. But nobody was stopping him. Neither Tain and Meilan were going to. This showed who Jagin was in his guild.

Philip knew speaking to Jagin won’t work, so he asked Tain instead.

“Do you think the same, Boss Tain?”

“We-well...”

Tain couldn’t answer as the question was suddenly drawn to him.

“I may be a Grade-E mercenary who lacks experience, but I have never seen how the common sense of the Mercenary world is being ignored like this. If even our smallest right is ignored like this, how do you think we would participate in the quest?”

“We-Well. That’s not true.”

Unlike how he talked during the tactical meeting, he was stuttering.

Although Rotem might be a small mercenary guild, Tain was dreaming of a skillful guild. Jagin was a skillful swordsman who was about to be an Expert, and he usually marked Boss monsters in the battle. Thus, Tain couldn’t oppose Jagin’s word that easily.

Tain clearly knew it was Jagin who was making an unreasonable demand, and he knew he was merely a member of his guild. However, he couldn’t take Haroon’s side who just joined the party a few days ago. If he did so, greedy and short-thinking Jagin and his two friends will quit the guild.

Tain bit his lower lips. He had to make a decision.

“To be honest, except the ones who were fighting the Orc Warrior, no one knows how Haroon’s throwing knife contributed killing the Warrior. And I don’t think there would be anyone who could have witnessed as the other mercenaries were fighting with the

orcs.”

Thinking it was very unfair, Haroon shut his eyes. He could feel his face was turning red and his head was getting hot because of anger. But he listened to Tain’s words attentively.

“It is hard to think Haroon’s dagger could have killed it thinking the distance. Even if we agree that your boss has used a spirit’s power, there is still a problem. The warrior was gravely injured by the three, so we can’t say for sure if it was the dagger it killed it, or if it was the injury that eventually killed it.

Haroon patiently listened only to hear the nonsense. Tain was acting differently from how he thanked him on the night of the battle. He didn’t expect him to spit two different minds in the same mouth.

Not only that, Haroon could see how mercenaries were seeing him differently. The mercenaries who got saved by Haroon was avoiding his eyes.

“B-b-but it was my boss’s dagger which killed the Warrior!”

Philip was stuttering because of feeling tight. Tain shook his head.

“Well, I did investigate it myself, but it wasn’t Haroon’s throwing knife that killed the Warrior. He admitted as well.

Haroon realized this was why a mercenary came to his tent last night to ask if the dagger he was holding was Haroon’s.

“Heh, yeah. It doesn’t make sense how grade-D mercenary has that skill. Moreover, a throwing knife with a spirit’s power? I’ve never heard of such a thing in my life.”

Somebody’s word emphasized the doubts that almost every mercenary had. The tide has turned against Haroon.

“Do you see what I mean? Killing a warrior with a throwing knife from that distance is impossible unless the knife is alive. However skillful an Elementalist is, do you think it makes sense that they can put a spirit’s power in the dagger? Moreover, the dagger penetrated its side of the head, not the back of it. It just doesn’t make any sense,” Jagin added.

He was smiling in satisfaction. He has been manipulating others by telling this theory for last three days. Since Tain wasn't present at the battlefield, Tain's logical thinking reached that Jagin's theory was more reasonable.

Haroon lost his words. He made a hollow smile. They say people's minds are sly. Haroon learned it hard way.

'Good to know, huh,' he thought.

He saw and feel how the majority can make the minority fools. He was once a hero, and now he was just a con. Some mercenaries were giving him a sad look, but the overall mood was already doubting Haroon's achievement. Their eyes were saying 'you liar!' and it made Haroon very angry.

Haroon looked at Meilan. She will be able to tell. She has witnessed the battlefield from the start to end. But she was avoiding his eyes, fixing her eyes on the ground.

'Should I just show Brat's presence?'

That'll do. Haroon just couldn't stand being a liar. But he changed his mind when he was about to open his mouth.

'I can't trust this kind of people as my friends. I've decided to accompany with Doran and Devron anyway. I think this is the moment where I can draw a line,' he thought.

That relieved his mind. Then he could see how troubled Tain and Meilan were. He could feel the concern they have, the concern of the leader who has to choose between the loyalty and relationship. The tragedy of the leader.

"Stop! Philip. Let's just finish it here."

"WHY? You even fell unconsciousness as you have used all your power, and NOW you are fully recovered, and why do you have to give up OUR rights? You could just SHOW them your spirit!"

Haroon stopped Philip in anger by coldly staring at him, then opened his mouth toward Tain.

“If they ‘would’ believe what they see, I would have. Can’t you see, Philip? They are intending... and determined not to share any portion of it no matter what. What’s the use of the proof, then?”

Some mercenaries turned away hearing that.

“Tain, I’ll be with you until we arrive Viscounty of Parson as we agreed to do so. But I simply can’t accompany with this kind of people any more than that. Now I see why people say it is hard to gain trust but it is easy to break. I thought we did enough to be appreciated, but I guess it was too much to make us liars. What a shame.”

That made mercenaries to feel mixed feelings. They knew they saved lots of lives even they don’t count the killing the Warrior.

“Haroon, please don’t take it too personally. Everyone has different thoughts. You know it isn’t like we were denying the fact that you and your members played a huge role in this journey, don’t you? I’ll pay you extra later, so calm down, would you?”

Finally, Tain joined the talk and tried to ease the mood.

At first, Tain did want to divide some portion to Haroon’s party, but Jagin squad’s stand was very firm. Their reason was that they couldn’t believe a newbie, grade-D’s godlike skill that they have never seen nor heard of.

To Tain, who wasn’t at the battlefield, Jagin’s word was quite reasonable. It was hard to believe that a mere grade D mercenary has such a skill. But his sister Meilan was saying Haroon did kill the Warrior. He knew she wouldn’t lie. He was confused.

After a long thought, Tain valued his friendliness higher than the truth. He didn’t have any reason to be a friend of Haroon and his party. It would just create more conflicts. And when they do get to Castle of Parson, they could recruit more mercenaries.

“But I won’t mess up this mission. I’ll show them what I’ve got,” Haroon added.

‘And I’ll show you that my words were right, and show Jagin Squad how wrong they’ve behaved,’ Haroon thought.

Tain could feel Haroon’s word were full of blades. He took a deep breath and nodded. Haroon was good at drawing lines between friends and others. It was something that

Tain wasn't good at so he could believe Haroon's words.

"It's a bit sad to lose you, but what can I say?"

The other mercenaries felt mixed feelings seeing a cold mood created by a mere Warrior's leather. Especially those wandering mercenaries, who were temporarily hired, saw exactly how they will be treated.

"Then, to your position!" Tain shouted out loud as if he was trying to ease his mind.

Like other mercenaries, Haroon and Philip headed back to their cart to check their weapons and gears. Jagin's squad, except Jagin himself, seemed uneasy of the situation as well. They went back to where their gears were at.

Tain let another deep sigh once again.

"His throwing knives could be a great help if he would come with us....."

With mixed feeling on her face, Meilan patted his shoulder hearing his monologue.

"Tain, Cheer up. Let's get some good people and make a guild that you want."

"I will. I just hope this matter wouldn't affect the battle ahead."

"It wouldn't. I don't think Haroon is that kind of person. Unlike Turan, who has fast thinking, Haroon thinks differently. Of course, if that kind of person gets angry, it would be much more terrifying, but I don't think he is that much angry yet."

"I think the same, Meilan."

The two has realized that they lost a good person because they didn't take a risk. But they thought they made the best choice they could take.

"Ay, Fuck! What did I do to deserve that sarcasm, you piece of shits? It was us who were risking our fucking lives!"

"We-Well, Jagin, you were over the line so..."

"Bullshit! It was US who almost killed it! Do you think it makes fucking sense that a

freaking Warrior would die to a mere god damned dagger when it easily fought with us, Fucking, whole, three, Experts?

“You are not wrong, but I don’t think it was just a mere dagger...”

“SHUT THE FUCK UP!”

Jagin was making quite a large noise. He is probably doing it to make Haroon hear him, but he didn’t realize not only Haroon was hearing it. Merchants and labor workers frowned their face hearing his swears.

“That file of shit,” a merchant lowly murmured.

Tain was able to overhear the merchant’s swear. Tain recognized the voice. It was the merchant, one of the ones who doesn’t like facing mercenaries.

“I can’t believe I hired that piece of shit to escort us, and I thought Rotem was different from other mercenaries,” said another merchant who was next to merchant who swore.

Those words hurt Tain’s heart like a dagger.

Unlike other mercenary guilds, who only cares about money, Tain always did his best to give trust to the merchants. He was unsettled by hearing those words.

‘Did I made a mistake thinking only of my easiness?’ He thought.

He thought he made a rational and reasonable decision, but he realized that it might not be the case.



“Boss, do you really want to give up that leather like this?”

“You don’t have to care about those who can’t trust their friends. The real man uses their strength on those who can appreciate it.”

Philip relieved his anger hearing Haroon’s determined words.

“Yeah, you are right. I mean, it’s not that worth it. I just wanted them to treat us properly. There is always one or two problems on small guilds when they make biased decisions toward their relationship.”

Philip, like someone who learned administration, pointed out what exactly the problem was.

“By the way, Philip, about the bandits hiding for the ambush, who are they?”

“Freaking bastards. In 4 words: Monsters with human clothing.”

His answer was simple. As if he knew Haroon wasn’t satisfied with his answer, he explained further.

“I knew you were ignorant about the world, but that’s a bit too much. Listen well, Boss. Not every bandit is same. Some were just farmers who couldn’t pay their tax. Some were minor criminals who ran from their landlords. These kind of bandits are forgivable. But according to what Phin said, those bandits with wolves are probably Wolf Bandits.”

“Wolf Bandits?”

“Yes. They say even babies stop crying hearing that name. They are most cruel, and fearful ones. They live with wolves, and attacks merchants or small village. Unlike the other bandits, they leave nothing behind. Like grasshopper swarm.

“You mean they do take peoples lives?”

“What else could it mean? People claim that hey saw those bastards eating human flesh. Some claims that they feed the wolves with human flesh. They are probably right. My father once told me he saw children’s bones scattered around in the town after the wolf bandits’ raid.”

“And they still walk in one piece?”

Haroon lost his words. Humans, eating another human?

“It is not like their one base. There is a lot of them. Unlike those ones who became bandits to survive, these are a group of criminals who fled from the law force of the

Empires. They are wild and strong.”

“But what are the nobles doing? Well, what about the Empires?”

A noble may not have enough arms, but an Empire would have a great army. He couldn’t understand why the Empires would allow their acts.

“It’s quite a long story. They began appearing more than 300 years ago. However, their forces were weak even a few decades ago. The Knights of Empire and the nobles cooperated to wipe them out. Some even became so-called heroes. This motivated other knights to actively participate the raid. But then...”

“Then what?”

“You know how the Emperor has been in poor health for 10 years. Because that dim light isn’t going off, the fight for the power has been getting intense between the imperial families. They are busy enough making changes in the parties’ political alignments with nobles. Soon after, they decided not to risk their troops to wipe ‘mere’ bandits. You know, they do take quite damage attacking wild, inhuman bandits with wolves.”

“Hmm...”

Haroon felt some kind of the whirlwind of change is blowing in the world of Beyond. He knew it by instinct. The story quest he got must be related as well.

“They gave up to be humans. Don’t let your mind disturb you,” Philip added.

Haroon nodded. He regretted spending his mind on moral on them as he learned the enemies are just cruel bastards. They were not humans anymore. They were monsters.

Haroon and Philip arrived where their members were at. Haroon explained to the members what the plan was.

“I’ll go with you, Boss,” said Philip.

Even they were about to be in need of murdering someone, they seemed not shocked by what they had to do. Philip even seemed excited by the situation. Then Haroon

realized the Quad Wankers were not just new mercenaries who just had their first combat not too long ago. They have been seeing and hearing about the mercenaries' life from their childhood.

But Haroon had to exclude Gitan and Serinn. They were just too coward. They had no reason to volunteer for a bloody battle anyway. He didn't even consider bringing Ritrina with him. With her rage, the party would have to give up the whole plan.

So Haroon agreed. Philip was the most skilled and experienced on in the party.



After assigning the quad wankers their position, Haroon checked his throwing weapons. The only reason Haroon was selected as the attacking squad was his skill with these so he couldn't care less about it. While he was busy checking his weapons, Doran came to him.

"Haroon, they say it is very likely to be the wolf bandits. Is that right?"

"That's what they say so."

"Then, here."

There were worry and concern in his face. He was handing a few small glass bottles.

"...What are these?"

"Mana potions and healing potions. Two each. Their quality may be low, but it should be enough for the battle. Don't hesitate to kill them. Those cruel ones should not exist. Not on this earth. But don't overtax like a few days ago."

Without a word, Haroon looked at Doran's face and hands, alternatively.

"We do believe in you and your members, but I'm giving you these as you can't suffer like a few days ago. Feel free, and take these. If it still bothers you, then pay me later."

Doran smiled. Haroon could feel Doran's cordiality. It was a pure heart coming from the worry. Haroon already had some potions in his inventory that Gitan and Philip gave him, but nothing is wrong to have more of it.

“Thank you very much for caring.”

Doran went back to his cart, and Haroon could see Devron and two kids were looking at him with worry and warm cheers.



Phin, Meilan and three other mercenaries with bows were waiting for Haroon when he got to the front of the party. As the first attacking group takes action, the other mercenaries will follow them shortly after, leaving only a few mercenaries to protect the merchants.

“Then, Let’s go,” said Phin.

He led the way. His body moved swiftly, making his way between the tall, thick grass and the trees. Three mercenaries followed him, along with Meilan and Haroon. Phin was on full alert, but he was still very fast. It wasn’t easy for the others to keep up. Considering the enemy scouts, he decided to take a rough path some distance away from the road. As the path was quite steep, Meilan and the three mercenaries got tired fast and started breathing heavily. Phin noticed that the party needed some rest, so he signaled for them to stop.

“I’ll need to check the bastards’ scouts first. You four, standby here. It would be better to move as a group again after Haroon and I find ’em and eliminate ’em.”

“Whew, good call, Phin.”

The four seemed relieved that they could take some rest.

“Well then! Let’s go, Haroon.”

Haroon nodded. They began to climb the mountain.

Phin made barely any sound despite how fast he was moving. Although Haroon was no match for Phin, his rigorous training allowed him to follow Phin without too much difficulty. Phin was impressed to see that. Seeing Haroon’s capability, he began to move in earnest, then he suddenly stopped and crouched. Naturally, Haroon crouched as well and waited for Phin’s signal.

Without a word, Phin raised his hand and pointed to the middle of the thick forest. There was a path naturally formed by people fringed by a few big trees. Phin was pointing at one of them. Haroon could see two people between the thick leaves. They were wearing leather clothes to blend in. He could also see two silver wolves walking further into the forest. If they were not in a higher position than them, they would not have been able to spot them.

While they were checking the enemy's location, Roam joined them without making a sound. Roam is a middle-aged, Grade-C mercenary who is also a scout of the party.

"How does it look?" Roam asked.

"No bold moves yet. They must be waiting for us."

"So it was Wolf Bandits after all."

"Can confirm. I saw the damned wolves, and them riding on it."

The two gnashed their teeth.

Wolf Bandits are the enemy of humanity. Unlike the beasts and monsters who attack others for food, they simply enjoyed killing.

"But they are too far. It's about 50 to 60 steps away from here," Phin added.

"How about luring them closer so Haroon can give it a shot?"

"Good call, but it's too risky."

Phin opposed to Roam's suggestion.

"Then how about moving to where they can see us?"

Like Roam said, if they move close enough, they will be revealing themselves but Haroon might be able to take care of the enemy scouts.

"Again, that's too risky. If they alert the others, this plan is over."

The two thought for a while.

At their front was the end of the cliff without any cover. If they moved any closer, they would be revealing themselves. If they went around the cliff to move closer without revealing themselves, it would take too much time and the bandits would notice that something was off. They had a wolf by their ears.¹

Haroon left the two, and climbed a tree to get a clear vision of the scouts. The two didn't stop him, as they thought Haroon was getting a better view. Haroon took out a throwing knife, and summoned Brat on stand-by.

– “Brat, you heard them, right?”

– “You are bothering me so much. But, ay, ay, SIR. However, it seems guiding the knife won't be enough as it is too far. I guess I would have to integrate with the knife, huh?”

Brat was being cocky again, but for some reason, it seemed enthusiastic. Is it because it recovered from the fight last time? Or is it just bored? Whichever, it was fortunate that it does want to fight.

– “Yes. And we are in quite a hurry, so let's get straight to the point. Kill the one in front of the tree, and stick the knife on the tree so the guy in the back won't notice anything.”

– “Okie.”

Phin and Roam saw Haroon withdrawing his throwing knife, but they never imagined that he would throw it. Even at a glimpse, it was more than 50 steps away. Yes, he may gain some distance because he is throwing from a high position, but there are trees between him and the scouts. After all, it wasn't a distance that a mere throwing knife could cover.

‘Well, yes, I heard he protected our members with his throwing knives. Some say he killed a Warrior with his dagger from 50 steps away, but, that's simply impossible, like Boss and Jagin said.’

This was what they both thought when Haroon withdrew the knife. They gave Haroon a doubtful look.

“*Summon,*” Haroon murmured.

[You are poisoned!]

Haroon could hear the UI sound as soon as he summoned Brat.

“Integrate spirit,” he continued.

Quietly, Haroon casted the spell and threw the knife hard.

“W-WHAT?”

“NO!”

Phin and Roam panicked. The knife didn’t care about them and flew at the bandit, illuminating blue lights. To avoid being spotted, it flew between the trees, rocketed high up in the air, and dropped right onto the bandit.

Since Brat would control the knife, Haroon didn’t need to calibrate or see the result of it. Instead, Haroon took an antidote and opened his status window to see the change in his mana point.

As he thought, the skill drained his mana. As the skill requires 50 mana per second, 200 mana was already spent while he breathed for a few times. He had enough E.F.P., but he was so nervous about his remaining mana that his mouth was drying up. Soon, he could hear the UI sound.

[You have slain a Grade-C criminal. You have acquired all of the opponent’s items.]

Finally, one down. But it was very surprising that he was able to acquire all of the bandits’ items. Is it because the system thinks of this as a PK(Player Kill)? But there was no time to think of that. Brat had already returned.

“Got him. But I saw another one down there,” said Brat.

“We need to get that bastard too.”

“Yaya.”

“Integrate Spirit.”

Haroon threw another knife, again with Brat integrated to it.

Phin and Roam were speechless. They saw that the knife moved like a living thing. And they saw it killing the bandit that they could barely see. They had just recovered from the shock when Haroon threw his second knife.

“Did he get him? With the knives?”

“So... I-It was t-true.”

They couldn't hide their admiration.

While that was happening, the skill took 200 more mana from Haroon, and it took another 50 until he could hear the UI sound.

[You have slain a Grade-C criminal. You have acquired all of the opponents items.]

‘I love how this works.’

These bandits must be considered as Boss monsters, or PvP Players. The system won't apply for NPCs, but to Haroon, a user, it was a very exciting fact.

“Hehehe! How do you like that, Master? ‘Quite killing’, eh?? *Kel-Kel-Kel-Kel*, I’m *soOO* good.”

“Get lost!”

Haroon had no more time to speak with Brat. Not when it chose a wrong wording for ‘Compliment me!’. As the skill took 450 mana, Haroon wasn't feeling good. He felt dizzy and woozy, just like how it feels after focusing intensely.

Before it was too late, Haroon drank a low quality mana potion, which restored all of his mana. As he could feel he was being recovered from the disorientation, he talked to the two, who were still in a daze.

“We’ve got the scouts. Let’s get moving.”

“Y-Yes, we should, Haroon.”

“I’ll give a signal to the party, and pick up the four.”

Phin and Roam were still surprised, but moved with haste. While Phin went to pick up the rest of the squad, Roam and Haroon went to one side of where the bandits were waiting to ambush.

Soon, Meilan and the other three arrived with Phin. They were soaked with sweat. Meilan heard from Phin that Haroon got rid of the scouts while they were moving, so she thanked Haroon first.

“Thanks, Haroon. I heard you took good care of their scouts. Let’s take a rest for a moment, and then execute the plan. We’ll start when the other group gets in position.”

The mercenaries unsheathed their weapons. Three of them checked their bows and arrows, and Meilan was memorizing her spell so she could use it whenever she wanted.

Phin silently moved next to Haroon.

“When Meilan creates the fog and silences us with her magic, me, Roam and you’ll go straight into the fog. As she won’t be able to cover entire forest, the bandits will move to the other side. The original plan was to leave you with the bowmen to attack the bandits when Roam and I draw them out. But we saw that your skill is beyond ours, so you move with us.”

“Got it. But wouldn’t the fog blind us as well?”

“Don’t worry about that. Meilan will cast Light Eye upon us.”

Now Haroon could see how the plan would go. Then it was just a matter of how wide an area the fog would cover, and how long would it take for the bandits to react.

Phin went back to see if the other group was prepared for the ambush. From the hill to the forest, there was a field of tall grass. From there, the second group would be waiting for the bandits that had been drawn out from the forest by the first attacking squad.

While the group was getting in position, Haroon was stroking his throwing knives as

a habit. Lost in thoughts, he remembered tricking the Quad Wankers, back in the Mercenary Academy. Thinking of how they suffered from the bad stomachache because of Brat's polluted materials, an idea went through his mind like lightning.

'Right, Brat's Poison! Wouldn't it kill them all instantly?'

Haroon breathed deeply. It was quite a reasonable move. Haroon has been using Brat's elemental skills, rather than its poisonous materials so far. Its poison can become a very effective means of fighting in the fog.

Haroon stood up and went deeper into the forest to talk with Brat. The others didn't bother as they thought Haroon went to pee.

"Summon Brat, at stand-by mode."

– "Hey, Brat!"

– "Oh, C'mon! What is it this time? I've already helped you once. Don't you think that is enough for the day? Shouldn't skillless Master give some consideration to skillful ME? You've got some nerve."

– "Quit saying nonsense, would you? Or I guess you want another punch in your face, right?"

This spirit is really good at spoiling everything it scored previously.

– "Eeks! Alright, Alright."

– "I have to say, you are really good at asking for a punch."

– "So what is it, Master? Make it quick. I'm so tired, and I was having a good dream."

Haroon asked Brat if its poison is strong enough to kill people, and how wide it can spread.

– "Isn't that obvious? Some polluted materials I've got are way too strong that no medicine can detoxify. On my own, I might be able spread it wide enough to kill a few people, but the rest depends on your capability. The more capable you are, the wider it would be. Of course, it wouldn't be that wide."

By capability, Brat meant mana points. Though Haroon's mana was now fully regenerated from the rest, he wasn't sure how long it would last.

'Dang, I thought it was a good idea, but my mana won't be enough.'

He thought for a while, but came up with nothing.

Brat intruded his train of thought.

– "Oh deary, deary me.'

– "What?"

Its words strangely pissed him off. It was talking like it was so pathetic to see him.

– "Nah, I was thinking my master was so pathetic that he can't think of me as a spirit
– a god damn spirit who can use the god damned wind. How pathetic."

That brightened up Haroon's mind.

'Yes, that's it! The wind will spread the poison!,' he thought, and said

– "I've been thinking of it. What kind of master do you think I am? I was considering my mana."

He was bitter to lie about it, and he knew quick-witted Brat would never be fooled by that, but his pride wouldn't let Brat win the argument.

– "Don't you know that wind is a unique elemental skill, so you can use E.F.P. instead? Oh gosh, why do I have to babysit you?"

– "That's it! Ok, you won, you brat! Just go back to your place."

He lost track of his health when he got lost in his thoughts, but fortunately, it wasn't too late. Haroon realized his H.P. was too low to have any further arguments, so he quickly unsummoned Brat and took an antidote.



Soon after, Phin came back to the first squad, and everyone stood up. It was time to act. Haroon joined them hastily. They have a plan, they just have to execute it.

“Alright, I’ll cast *Fog* from that boulder over there, so wait for my signal here,” said Meilan.

Everyone nodded nervously on her order.

“Uh, Meilan?”

She saw Haroon hesitated to say something.

“What’s the matter, Haroon?”

“...I’ll protect you when you’re casting the spell. Just in case.”

“That’ll be very helpful, I appreciate it.”

Magicians are very vulnerable when they are casting the spell with voice. At that moment, even a small impact on them can break the spell, and in the worst case scenario, the mana flow can be reversed, killing the caster.

Meilan and Haroon went to a giant boulder that was 20 steps away from where they rested. The boulder and its shade would hide them well from the bandits’ eyes.

Meilan started casting the spell that she had memorized.

Like a fairy tale, the fog started to cover the forest soon after. Meilan gently closed her eyes, and focused on her magic rod. To maximize the effect, she was extracting mana from her mana circle located near her heart, which resonates with runes.

The area of effect started getting larger and larger. It was an easy task for a 4 circle mastered magician. Soon, two fifths of the forest was covered with the fog. They could hear some noises coming from the forest. The bandits must be confused by the situation.

Haroon summoned Brat, only moving his lips.

“Brat, Now!”

“Aye. Scattering Poison! Wind!”

On Haroon’s order, Brat scattered his poison and spread it using wind. The effectiveness of it depends on how much it will be spread. Haroon opened up his status window and fixed his eyes on his remaining H.P., M.P, and E.F.P... If he spend too much of them now, the rest of the battle will be hard for him. He still had some more work to do.

“Stop!” Haroon shouted when his E.F.P. was at 30.

Brat came back and started chatting.

“Hehehe. It ain’t much, but I spread it to where they are crowded, so it’ll be a good view, Master. By the way, I saw them having some delicious thing to drain. Let me eat those, OK? It’ll help me a lot to recover my abilities, lost by you.”

“Alright.”

Haroon wasn’t quite sure what it meant, but he had to unsummon it before he reaches his limit. He was tired as he had spent half of his mana and almost all of his elemental force. He quickly took a mana potion and an antidote. Soon, he was able to move his body with ease again.

“Well, Let’s go then,” said Meilan

She rushed Haroon as she was in good mood, because she was satisfied to see how wide it spread. It had spread out more than she thought it would. She didn’t notice, but Haroon saw that some portion of the fog was being darkened by the poison.

Back with the group, Meilan cast silence magic on Phin, Roam, and Haroon.

“It won’t last more than 5 minutes, so you have to move hastily.”

As soon as she spoke, they ran down to the forest. They would have to make the most of their 5 minutes. Meilan and three bowmen quietly moved to the pit they had made to hide.

Suddenly, Phin cringed his face and signaled to stop, whispering,

“Poison! Stop, there is poison everywhere.”

“What is it now?”

“Poison! I already got poisoned. It’s a strong one!”

“You don’t mea... Ugh! I got poisoned too!”

Phin and Roam’s arms were already turning blue. Haroon’s arm was fine, but his hands were getting dark, and it was slowly changing its color.

They hurried their way to the pit where Meilan and the others were hiding. Fortunately, the bandits hadn’t noticed them as they were still confused by the fog.

“What’s the matter, Phin?” Meilan asked.

“Oh shit! It’s poison!” One of the mercenaries shouted.

The mercenaries were surprised, and moved away from Phin.

“It’s a very strong one. It already got to my shoulder!”

Phin’s voice was very urgent, but Meilan’s face was turning white. She didn’t have enough mana to detoxify the poison. Counteract, the magic that detoxifies poison, wasn’t an option that even she, a circle 4 magician, could take when she used almost all of her mana.

“Here, I’ve got some antidote.”

Haroon quickly took out some antidotes and handed them to Phin and Roam, and took one himself. Hector’s antidote was very effective, and their arms went back to normal.

At that moment, Haroon could hear numberless UI sounds, overlapping with each other.

[You have slain a Grade-D criminal. You have acquired all of the opponents items.]

[You have slain a Grade-C criminal. You have acquired all of the opponents items.]



A near endless number of them drew his mind blank.

‘S-Sick! I guess most of them were in ambush near us!’ Haroon thought.

Phin and Roam came to Haroon.

“Haroon, thanks. You saved my life!”

“That was really effective, Haroon!”

They hugged Haroon to thank him. If it wasn’t for him, they would have died by the strong poison.

Meilan’s face was coming back to normal as well.

“What’s going on, though?” said Meilan.

Phin shook his head, confused, and said,

“I have no idea, Meilan. I am pretty sure there was no poison there before...”

“Despite what happened, this could go in favor of us. But as we don’t know how wide the poison has spread, or if it is moving with the wind, we have to get back to the other group and retreat with them.”

Phin ran back to where the other group was hiding in a hurry. If the wind carried the poison to the group in the back, it could wipe out the entire group. The rest of the squad followed him.

Soon, they were able to join the main group in the grass field. Fortunately, the wind was blowing to the forest. Meilan reported the situation, and prepared to attack with them.

“Poison! We are getting poisoned!”

“Get out of the forest! Quick!”

After a while, some noises and screams came from the forest, and the forest spit out about 50 bandits and more than 100 wolves. Unlucky for them, they were heading to where the mercenaries were hiding.

The bandits were in panic because of the poison. They carelessly ran away from the forest. Surprisingly, there were more wolves that survived from the disaster.

“NOW!”

With Tain’s booming voice, the mercenaries started their attack with throwing weapons.

“Argh!”

“Guh! Mo-ther...”

As the bandits and wolves were running directly to where the mercenaries were at, they had no window to avoid the throwing weapons thrown at them from 20 steps away. Their momentum only caused the throwing weapons to have more impact on them. A few dozens of them in the front line got killed by the mercenaries’ first attack.

“Again, NOW!”

Another wave of throwing weapons were thrown. At this time, Phin, Roam and the bowmen were ready with their bows; Meilan and her niece were ready with their fireballs.

“Gugh!”

At least they should be happy that they were killed instantly. Those who survived from the first attack, with knives and daggers stuck in their bodies, had to take another shot.

‘Dang, more bandits could have been killed if it weren’t for the wolves,’ thought Haroon.

There were more wolf corpses than bandit corpses. Still, the number of remaining bandits were outnumbering the mercenaries.

“CHARGE!”

With Tain’s order, the mercenaries jumped out of the pit, shouting and running at the bandits.

Emotions are quite strange things, and it can make living things act differently from how they think. When the bandits were in ambush, they knew that they could easily outnumber the mercenaries. But when the actual fight began, and they saw their front line demolished by the throwing weapons, and could see the mercenaries courageously charging at them, some bandits started running away, giving up the fight.

Finally, the bandits and mercenaries started striking their weapons at their enemies. Greatswords and dual blade strikes making sparks; Axes and iron clubs making metallic sounds. It was a matter of killing, or being killed. The faces of the mercenaries and bandits were turning red, and their muscles seemed like they would burst at any second. They looked for each others openings, and the eyes for that were burning with their hard pumping heart and fighting spirit.

The battle was going in the Mercenaries’ favor. The bandits were tired since they just ran about 100 steps from the forest, and the mercenaries were waiting for them with their weapons and minds ready. After a few strikes, the mercenaries gained momentum. Tain had already slain 3 bandits, and Jagin was looking for another opponent after slaying two of them. Haroon also joined the battle wielding his sword, attacking with Turan.

“Tonight! We will be drinking their blood and eating their flesh!” Someone shouted.

A wolf, the size of a horse, had appeared from behind the bandits. A Bandit was riding on it, and it seemed he was the one who shouted. The shout was so loud that the atmosphere vibrated for a while.

The mercenaries’ will was dampened for a while. The Bandits’ shout had a similar effect to that of a beasts’ or a boss monsters’ roar, which can cause fear on humans with a weak will.

“You bastard!” Tain Shouted.

His shout also contained some mana, and it helped the other mercenaries to wake up

from the fear. He charged at the Boss bandit. Jagin and his squad followed him.



A sword was dropping on Haroon's face, trying to cut it in half.

"Not today!"

Haroon swiftly dodged the attack, and jumped at the chest of the attacker to stab.

"Guh!"

His sword penetrated the bandit's heart, but that didn't quite kill the bandit. Haroon felt that the bandit was still trying to move his arm to attack Haroon back, so Haroon pulled out his sword, turning his wrists. It was disgusting to see blood bursting out from the bandit's chest, but strangely that didn't unsettle Haroon. Now, he was considering the bandits as monsters, not humans. Only the UI sound, which alerts that he has killed another criminal, has his interest.

"Woah, Boss, you are good!" said Gitan.

Gitan has killed someone by himself too, and as he had no opponent to fight with, he saw how Haroon fought. In fact, It was the first time he saw Haroon's proper swordsmanship, as all he had seen was his throwing knife skill. When Haroon finished his opponent, Gitan moved his eyes to the battlefield, and saw a bandit cutting the chest of a mercenary. Spinning his greatsword high up in the air, he jumped at the bandit.

The bandit tried to block Gitan's greatsword with his own. At the impact, the bandit's sword broke with a crashing sound. The bandit began stumbling because of the aftershock. A mercenary didn't miss the chance and cut the side of the bandit with his sword. It was the one who got an injury in his chest. Because he moved his body too much, the cut opened and it couldn't hold his organs anymore. The signs of life faded from his eyes.

To kill, or to be killed. It was a cruel fight. The bandits and mercenaries on the battlefield didn't fear death. Even when they were heavily injured, they attacked their opponent no matter what. The battle was so horrible that one could not look at it without a brave heart.

Haroon focused on stabbing rather than slashing. He instinctively found the openings made by the opponents' big moves, and his sword found its shortest way to the opponent. When he had killed two other bandits, he felt an airflow caused by a greatsword. It was coming from the side. His Sense Sword moved like a snake, directly against the flow of the greatsword, and penetrated the bandit's heart. He pulled out his sword from the screaming bandit. Again, he felt another danger instinctively, and rolled to the side.

"Die!"

A spiked iron ball with the size of a child's head struck where Haroon was standing. A bandit, who was wearing a silver wolf's head as a helmet, smiled and showed his black teeth. He was pulling an iron chain to get his ball back.

But he wasn't the only one who was targeting Haroon. Another bandit, who just took one life, had attacked from the flank. Startled, Haroon pulled his hip back. The sword grazed by a narrow gap. He could smell the rotten breath coming from the bandit's mouth.

But the bandit's sword was a two-handed sword, while Haroon's iron sword was one handed.

As the bandit had lowered his upper body to stab Haroon, Haroon held the sword only with his right hand, and held the Bandit's neck with his left arm. The bandit shook his body, and Haroon lost balance because of that. But Haroon didn't let him go.

With his right arm, Haroon put the blade on bandits gut, and put strength in his arms. A scream came out from the dirty mouth. Haroon saw the deathly sphere spinning in the air, again to target Haroon, but he still didn't let the bandit go.

With great hostility and bursting fighting spirit, Haroon felt as if his blood was boiling. But at the same moment, indescribable sensation spread across his body. The bandit was still resisting, but it didn't last long. Before the bandit could hold his weapon properly again, Haroon turned with great speed, breaking the bandit's neck.

The head got turned grotesquely, but there was no time to think of it. The deathly sphere was shot at Haroon's head. Using the dead body as a shield, Haroon jumped at the bandit. With a dull sound of flesh and bone, the sphere hit the body, and Haroon

couldn't avoid stumbling from the aftershock.

Haroon let the dead body go to recover his balance, and flung his body at the bandit, with his sword ready. The bandit tried to let the weapon go and move away, but the chain was linked to his wrist and the weight of the sphere prevented it. All he could do was accept death, with fear in his eyes.

It was Haroon's first combat in close range. It was different from how he attacked the bandits with his throwing knives. There was no time for thinking. Almost falling in unconsciousness, sometimes not avoiding but parrying the attacks, Haroon's sword looking for openings was being stained with blood.

"STOP! STOP!!"

When dim sounds became reality, Haroon realized there were no more bandits attacking him. Haroon look around, and saw a few bandits running from the battlefield, away from the forest. There were corpses of mercenaries, bandits and wolves all over the place.

"Damn, Boss. I knew you were great at throwing knives, but I didn't know that you were great with your swords. You fought like a berserker!"

Philip smiled, with his thumbs up. He was covered with blood, not his, and it was contrasted with white teeth.

"How about the enemy?"

"Well, numerous small fry ran away, and several head to heads are going on now."

With a deep breath, Haroon swung his sword to shook off the blood. He could see Tain and Jagin were having an intense fight with two bandits.

The last two bandits were wearing silver wolves' heads as helmets. They were skilled, and were well equipped. It seemed the one with a giant axe was the boss, and the one with a giant sword was the underboss.

Tain's sword was releasing a blue light, which means he was using aura, but the Bandit boss's axe was also releasing a blue light. No matter how they struck together, not even a single scratch was made on their weapons.

Jagin also seemed like he was using an aura, but he was no match for the underboss, or Tain. Whenever his sword and the giant sword struck, he had to back off to remain balanced. As he wasn't as good as Tain is, the aura kept going on and off.

Two others in Jagin's squad were fighting with giant silver wolves, which seemed to belong to the boss and underboss bandits. Surprisingly, they couldn't win against the wolves.

The wolves' size was as big as the humans, but their movements were as light as the winds. Moreover, their claws and teeth were as long as human fingers, sharp as blade and hard as steel.

The wolves dodged the swords well, and leaped to bite or claw the mercenaries. The mercenaries managed to dodge their attack as well.

"It seems they are losing," said Haroon.

"Yes, it seems so. Jagin's squadmates are on the edge, though. The bandits might be back with reinforcements if they lose this fight."

About twenty bandits and dozens of wolves were running away from the battlefield. But if the mercenaries lost the head to head fights, they might come back to outnumber the remaining mercenaries, which was less than a dozen. Moreover, those who are not injured were exhausted. They were breathing hard, and were taking a rest as they couldn't chase the bandits. They couldn't rest properly, as they had to be prepared for the worst case scenario, until the battle was done.

"*Argh!*" Someone cried.

The mercenaries looked to where the sound came from. One of the silver wolves had bitten the thigh of one of Jagin's squadmates. He seemed shocked. He dropped the sword, and screamed, quaking with fear. Blood flew out where the fang has punched a hole. The silver wolf had tasted the blood, and it drove the wolf into a frenzy.

"*GAAARGH !*" The mercenary screamed.

The wolf's mouth was being stained with red blood.

Another man of Jagin's panicked, and lost his will to fight with the wolf. Not even trying to wield his weapon, he started frantically running away from the wolf. Jagin, too, seemed to be in danger. He seemed he would get hit by the deathly sphere² at any second.

'Shit!'

Haroon instinctively took a dagger out of the belt. Although Jagin and his squadmates are cheap and dirty, he couldn't let them be killed by the wolves. Even if they wouldn't thank him, he had to save them. It felt like he would regret it if he didn't save them.

He threw the dagger.

The silver wolf seemed like it had sensed the dagger, and leaped away from the projectile, but didn't let the mercenary go. It showed how cruel, and persistent it is.

'Shit! That's it.'

Haroon took out another dagger. Even if he would regret that he had saved Jagin's squad, he didn't want to feel guilty about not saving a life from danger.

"Summon! Integrate!"

At last, he had to summon Brat. The integrated dagger released a blue light, and was shot at the silver wolf.

The wolf sensed the dagger again, and threw the mercenary into the dagger's path. Not only its size and jaw muscle were stronger than the other wolves, but it was quite clever as well.

"NO!"

With someone's cry, some mercenaries shut their eyes and turned away. But the dagger dodged the mercenary and turned its path, and headed to the mouth of the wolf. Startled, the wolf tried to leap away from the dagger, but the dagger was faster. It struck its head.

[You have slain the Silver Wolf Boss. You have acquired an item.]

[Focus is increased by 1 point.]

[E.S.P. is increased by 1 point.]

[You have acquired 3 Soul Point.]

“Holy shit!”

“The dagger is living! So it was true that he uses an elemental spirit to control the dagger!”

That shocked the mercenaries. Some even forgot to breathe for a while watching how the dagger had made a miracle. Meanwhile, some mercenaries were trying to help Tain out, wielding their weapons.

Something sounded like it exploded. As they turned to where the sound came from, Tain was staggering like a drunken man. It seemed like Tain and the Bandit Boss struck using all their force, but the Bandit Boss recovered from the shock, only with a few back steps.

“Help him out! quickly!”

Every mercenary started running. But they were too far, more than 20 steps away. The Bandit Boss had already raised his giant axe high up in the air, and would make Tain a meat cube at any moment.

Haroon hurriedly summon Brat on stand-by mode.

– “Brat.”

– “Really? You don’t have enough mana.”

It was after a close-up fight. Haroon’s health point and mana point was quite low. Even if he drinks a mana potion, there wouldn’t be enough time to wait for the regeneration.

– “Fuck! But I can’t let him die!”

– “Alright, I will use my power as much as possible.”

“*Summon! Integrate! GO!*”

Haroon threw the dagger as hard as possible.

The mercenaries who were running to help their boss saw the dagger flying at the speed of lightning. The dagger passed the mercenaries in a second, and headed to the neck of the Bandit Boss.

But the Bandit Boss simply deflect the dagger with his axe. It was quite impressive how he wielded the giant axe like paper. At least, it earned enough time for Tain to recover his balance and release a final strike using all of his mana.

Two weapons with auras struck. With an explosive roar, they both staggered. Although the Bandit Boss was stronger and had more mana than Tain, the dagger had prevented him from using all his force. Tain managed not to fall down, barely grabbing his sword. Suddenly, Tain's eyes were opened wide.

The dagger, which was supposed to be bounced off the axe and flew away, has turned back and hit the back of the Bandit Boss's thick neck. The Bandit Boss dropped his axe, making a face that he couldn't believe the situation, and pulled the dagger out with his hands.

A huge amount of blood spurt out of the hole.

"Sh-it! That son... of... bitc-... *Kugh!*"

Finally, the Bandit Boss fell down on the ground.

Tain clearly heard the dead body falling on the ground. He trembled at the thought of the battle. He was one step away from the gate of Hell, and yet, it didn't feel real to him. Tain's eyes were on; not Jagin who got a cut in his arm while the Bandit boss was dying, not the bandits who were running away from the battlefield, but Haroon.

[You have slain a Grade-A criminal. You have acquired all of the opponent's items.]

[You have received 100 gold as a bounty]

[You have gained 300 Fame]

[You have acquired 10 Soul Points]

[You have been granted the title of 'Bounty Hunter – C']

[You are rewarded with 5 Soul Point, and every stat is increased by 1 point.]

[Focus is increased by 1 point]

[E.S.P. is increased by 1 point]

What a pleasure to hear those U.I. sounds. But Haroon was busy enough holding his mind together to not faint from lack of health and mana. He could barely move his hand to take a mana potion out.

‘Only grade C for the bounty hunter title for killing a Grade-A criminal? I guess the grading system for criminals are judged by their action, not their skill.’

Haroon secretly hoped for him to be a great criminal. If he isn’t one, Haroon doubted that the items that he dropped would be good ones.

“Watch out!” Somebody shouted.

Haroon saw a blurry image of a bandit’s giantsword dropping on Jagin, but he couldn’t do much about it.

“Aargh! My arm!” Jagin cried.

‘I want to help, but I am out of mana,’ Haroon thought.

Enough mana was regenerated to allow Haroon to move his arms. He drank the mana potion. Soon, when he got vivid sight back, he could see the miserable scene of Jagin. Jagin was screaming, suffering from the pain coming from his left shoulder. He was holding it with his right arm.

The under-boss, who cut Jagin’s left arm, was running away. He had gained quite a bit of distance already. Tain ran to Jagin to hold where the limb was dismembered to stop him from bleeding to death, but he himself wasn’t fully recovered from the shock yet. Rotem’s only medic ran to Jagin.

When Haroon finally knew the battle was done, the scene of the battlefield finally came into his eyes.

‘This is horrible!’

Those who lost one or two limbs were screaming. Dead bodies were lying around here and there. Especially, the condition of corpses of those who got killed by the wolves were so horrible that he couldn’t directly look at them.

Tain looked at Haroon with mixed feelings for a while, then he realized that his

mercenaries were about to panic because of the situation.

“Clean up the battlefield!”, Tain ordered.

The first thing they did was to move the mercenary corpses to one place. If the body were missing limbs, they found them and collected them as well. They chose to live dangerously, which some may call low-life, valuing money over their lives. But that didn't mean that they don't deserve a good-bye from their friends.

When Meilan recovered her mana, she went around the battlefield to heal injured mercenaries. The medic applied ointment under the nose of injured ones, which helped them to get some sleep for a rest.

Tain and two other mercenaries checked the dead bodies and their belongings. They recorded every detail, and put the items in a small bag. It would be sent to their family or their relatives. It was horrible, but it was what a leader of a group must do.

When they finished moving the corpses, Haroon and Philip flopped down in a clean place.

“Boss, that was really bloody.”

Haroon found it awkward to hear that from someone who was fighting crazily in the battle, but Philip was serious.

“It was a matter of surviving or not. It couldn't be helped.”

Haroon was surprised how calm his mind was. He wasn't too excited, nor downed from the shock of the battle. When the battle was done, his fighting will was all gone, and his mind came back to calm with peace, like nothing happened at all.

“Boss, you really are quite special. And now I have no idea who you are and what kind of life you lived, but you did so great today.”

“Huh, Special? You think so?”

Haroon gave a hollow laugh and looked up at the sky. The weather was clear, the sky a dark uncaring blue. Haroon thought that it just doesn't get along with the situation.

“Well, time for the glorious loot!” said Gitan, coming to where Philip and Haroon was sitting.

Haroon could see that the mercenaries finished burying their squadmates and started looting the corpses, taking bandits weapons and belongings. Some seemed happy about getting precious items.

The scene came to Haroon like a comic relief. They’ve just buried their friends, and in the next moment they were happy about getting new items. It was rather bitter, but he thought maybe it could be natural to mercenaries. Who would ever dare to be a mercenary if they couldn’t get any loot like now.

“Why don’t you go and join, Philip? I know you have slain some.”

“Shall I, Boss?”

Philip didn’t seem unsettled by looting a dead body as he grew up under a mercenary family. With curiosity floating on his face, he joined the mercenaries. Haroon also wanted to check the items he got, but decided not to as many eyes were watching him. It was at that moment when someone shouted,

“Poison! Everybody, get away from here!”

“The wind is carrying the poison downhill!”

It was Tain and Meilan.

They were the ones who were nearest to the forest as they went to check the Bandit Boss’s dead body. They sensed the change of wind, and saw black fog, which seemed like a poison cloud, slowly crawling out of the forest. Their expressions made it seem quite urgent.

As the two shouted and warned the mercenaries, the mercenaries on the battlefield stopped looting the bodies and started evacuating, helping the injured ones. It was so urgent, that some even gave up the weapons they looted.

Haroon saw this as a chance. This was perfect timing to summon Brat. People were running away as fast as they could.

“Hey! Come out, quickly.”

“W-H-Y! I am freaking tired.”

Here it goes again. But that wasn't the problem.

“Absorb the poison that you released.”

“Hehehe, if that's why, of course, master.”

“Don't leave anything behind.”

“No worries. I can't eat these as these kind of things are so rare.”

Haroon quickly took an antidote, and opened his status window to check remaining mana. The poison cloud could not spread further, and was disappearing as Brat moved.



“What made you so late, Boss!” Philip shouted.

Philip, Phin and Roam were waiting for him downhill. What loyalty they had, thinking how they decided to wait there, instead of waiting for him at the carts.

“Well, while I was running, I saw the black cloud dissipating as it flew away high up in the air. That was quite a scene, so I couldn't miss it,” Haroon replied.

“What do you mean, Haroon? Do you mean the poison cloud just disappeared?”

Phin asked, surprised.

“I guess it did. I just went to the point where the Bandit Boss died, and it seemed fine.”

“Really?”

Phin and Roam still seemed feared by the poison, but as scouts of Rotem, they went over the hill to check if it was true.

“Strange. it really disappeared.”

“Hmm.”

They shook their head, and joined Haroon and Philip.

“Well, let’s get down now.”

“Yeah, we will have to report about this as well.

It was the last danger they faced on the way to the Viscounty of Parson. But the aftermath of the battle has slowed down the mercenaries. They were able to arrive at the castle in the afternoon of the next day.

The merchants decided to stay in the same inn the Rotem mercenaries regularly used. After unpacking things, they went to the market for trading. The mercenaries had lots of things to do as well. They had to sell the leathers and other loots, repair or buy new gear and stock the supplies.

Some merchants decided to quit the party. They would settle down here for a while and continue their trading in the castle. Of course, Devron and Doran were among them.

When the party departs the castle, some other merchants would join the party instead. That’s what Doran told Haroon about how the merchant trips work.

While everyone else were busy doing their own business, Haroon went to one of the biggest rooms in the inn where Rotem mercenaries were using it as a temporary headquarter. Tain, Meilan and few other mercenaries were in the room. The Quad Wankers waited outside, as they didn’t even want to meet them any longer.

“We were so grateful to have you with us. I am sorry I didn’t thank you until now, forgive me. I was just way too busy until now. Thank you for saving my, and everybody’s life.”

Tain gently held Haroon’s hands and thanked him.

“Not at all. It was the Bandit Boss’s mistake, after all.”

It wasn't a lie. No Expert swordsmen were weak enough to be killed by a throwing weapon, even if a spirit was integrated into it. Yes, the dagger was moving unexpectedly, but Experts are called Experts as they can react fast enough to defend themselves from it.

To add, if one knew the dagger was integrated with a spirit, even Gitan, an advanced swordsman, would be able to protect himself from the dagger, as Haroon couldn't maintain the skill for a long time. Thus, it was the Bandit Boss's mistake, underestimating the dagger.

"To be honest, I didn't trust your skill as I didn't see it with my very own eyes. My apologies. I have been deceived too much and I began to believe only what I saw. But now, I can see how frustrated you would have been back in the last meeting we had before the battle. I am truly sorry, and thank you for what you have done for us."

"It was my duty as a comrade. Even if it was just for a moment."

"Well, that still doesn't mean I am not going to reward you for saving my life or your performance in the battle. Meilan?"

"Yes, oppa. Here."

Tain received a leather bag from Meilan, and handed it over to Haroon.

"What is this?"

"Mana potions. Meilan saw how you suffer from lacking mana, if you were to use that impactful skill. As soon as she arrived at the castle, she went to the temple to buy those. We are sorry we couldn't give you high quality ones, but we believe it will still be useful."

Haroon undid the knot and opened the bag. It was full of small glass bottles. Even at a first glance, he knew there were at least twenty of them.

"But, this is too much."

According to what Bell told him, mid-quality potions were being traded at around 7 gold. It would be a lie if he didn't expect a reward, but this was way more than what he expected.

“No, not at all. Wouldn’t it be much cheaper than my life, don’t you think? I would have given more if we didn’t lose some money on the last trip.”

Haroon refused to receive them, but Tain’s stance was firm. Eventually, Haroon had to take the bag.

“By the way... Have you thought of joining us?”

Just as he thought, Tain asked Haroon to join them after giving a gift. But Haroon had already received a new quest. Moreover, he’d prefer not to accompany them because of Jagin.

Tain read Haroon’s expression, and whispered in his ear.

“If Jagin is a concern to you, don’t worry about it. He got his left arm cut off, and received a great injury to his thigh. He wouldn’t be able to be a mercenary ever again.”

Seeing how Tain was saying it emotionlessly, he didn’t seemed sad about losing Jagin.

“It’s not about him. We just want some rest, and we will use that time to see what else we could do.”

Haroon knew a flat refusal is needed at times like this. He had experienced this kind of situation multiple times in real life. Of course, Haroon had been in Tain’s position most of the time. But he learnt that a stern refusal helps the opponent to give up easily.

“Hmm, that’s a shame. Each member of yours is better than hundreds of the others.”

Tain still couldn’t let them go.

“We are sorry, but I must say ‘so long’ for now. The wind doesn’t stay in one place.”

“Only if I trusted in you way sooner...”

Tain seemed to be regretting his choice.

“Don’t mention it. Well then, we have to get on our way.”

With that, Haroon stood up. He knew it would be harder for both of them as this moment got longer.

“Stay well, Haroon. I will buy you some nice clothes³ when we meet again,” said Meilan, giving a wistful smile.

“I won’t forget you Boss Tain and Boss Meilan. I hope you’ll have a safe trip.”

“Same to you. Let’s get a proper drink next time we meet again,” Tain replied.

After exchanging some farewells with other mercenaries, he left the room. He felt some kind of a big boulder being removed from his shoulders.

‘And that bastard didn’t come just as I thought.’

Although he didn’t expect anything from Jagin, he thought the mercenary he saved from the wolf would come at least to thank him. But he never came near Haroon at all.

‘From now on, I won’t even think of ungrateful bastards! Never, ever.’

It was a short moment, but it had taught Haroon numerous valuable lessons. With the Quad Wankers, Haroon headed to the place where he and Devron decided to meet.

Footnotes:

¹ ‘have the wolf by ears’ – https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/have_the_wolf_by_the_ear

² “Wait, didn’t the underboss use a greatsword?”
Apparently, it seems he has both, or it is an error made by the author.

³ Clothes are considered as good gifts in Korean culture.

Chapter 9

New journey

Haroon and the quad wankers headed to a small inn located near the west gate of the castle, where Doran has introduced him. Though the building was quite small compared to where the Rotem mercenaries were, it was enough to have a good rest as the rooms were clean and the food was good.

The Quad Wankers seemed upset about Haroon accepting a quest without talking to them, but he didn't care. They wouldn't be leaving him anytime soon, after all. He would use them as much as possible for a year. Then who knows, they might become his men.

They left the castle in the early morning. Like the north gate where tight inspections were held, the west gate also had very serious inspections going on. It didn't take that long as they didn't even have a cart.

"Why are they so picky? How dare they even search through a lady's bag? They are so ill-mannered," Serinn complained.

Usually, only a few guards would be protecting the gate. But now, even the knights were present for inspections.

"I don't think this is a usual inspection," said Philip.

"That's what I thought. Something is going on around here, including the metropolis. Even my manager didn't like that I was going out of the city on a journey," Gitan agreed.

Commenting on the inspection, they hurried on their way. Unlike the other gates where the road was routed to other cities, the west gate was quiet. They saw no one until they met Doran and Devron at the beginning of some wheat fields, where they had agreed to meet.

"Devron!"

“Welcome. We’ve been waiting.”

Devron, Doran’s family, A girl who is the main character of the Story Quest, and a strange lady were waiting for them. Unlike Haroon and his members, they were carrying just a few backpacks. They must have disposed of their carts in such a short time.

“Let me introduce you to the new faces here. This is my niece Briella, and this is Hall. She is an assassin mage, and she will be guarding Briella. We hired her a long time ago as Briella has been weak and sick for quite some time now. Briella, Hall, this is Haroon, the leader of mercenary guild The Gusts of Wind,” said Devron.

Haroon and the Quad Wankers’ eyes were filled with curiosity. A lady who seems to be only about 20 years old is a magician who has gone through assassin training. They couldn’t be more surprised.

Briella and Hall greeted by nodding without any words. Hall gave them a cold shoulder. Her cold stare made them not even dare to be curious about Briella.

Briella had a pale face and sickly appearance. She was skinny and her face wasn’t particularly pretty, but she had quite an aura and crystal clear eyes, and it was impressive enough to not think about the rest of her appearance.

It was contrasted by Hall’s black clothing, more because she was standing next to Briella. Hall was wearing black clothes with wide sleeves and tight ends, tied with strings. She had a sword in the back and was holding a magic wand. She certainly looked cold.

“Nice to meet you, the Name’s Haroon. These four are my friends and the other members of The Gusts of Wind. This is Philip, Gitan, Serinn, and last but not least, Ritrina. We will be escorting you to the Viscounty of Paros.”

Haroon introduced his members to Briella and Hall. He continued.

“I heard you’ve got a plan that you haven’t told us yet, may we know about it before we go?”

He asked Devron. It wasn’t long ago that they had met, but Haroon figured out that this old man was in a way higher position than Doran was.

“About the plan, let’s talk about it when we meet my friend who will be our pathfinder. For now, we need to get to Saron Wetland.”

“You mean the Saron Wetland, also known as the Swamp of Death that is full of poison?” Philip asked, surprised.

“That’s right. We’ll stop for a lunch before we enter the place, and meet my friend there. Then we’ll talk about the plan.”

“Got it.”

The party hurried towards Saron Wetland. Haroon and the Quad Wankers were surprised that Briella didn’t get tired, despite how sick and weak she looked.

After having two breaks, they were able to arrive at the forest near the wetland before noon. They stopped by the hill, which was not so far from the forest. It was a good place to take a rest, as there was a tree with large branches and leaves.

“The wetland is just beyond the forest. So about the plan, do you see the mountains over there? They are called the Norflox mountains. We’ll go around the wetland, and go over the Norflox mountains to get to Paros castle. That’s a brief plan, but we’ll need to wait for Teeno to give more details about it.”

Haroon tracked where Devron’s finger was pointing to. He could see gigantic mountains.

“Boss, did I tell you that I hate climbing?”

Serinn already got scared. Well, she hates her clothing getting messed up. She cared for her body and beauty so much that she even customized her armor to fit her body tightly. Ritrina sneered from hearing Serinn’s words.

Haroon wanted to check his loot, so he brought some bread with him and entered the forest, away from the Quad Wankers. He couldn’t check the loot before as they always moved with him. As Haroon saw that the Quad Wankers were about to follow him, he excused himself by saying he needs quiet time to think. As soon as he entered the forest, he could smell something.

‘What is this smell? It is quite similar to what I’ve smelt in the drainage.’

Just like the smell in the drainage where he found Brat, a foul smell stung his nose. But curiosity dragged him deeper into the forest.

Whatever kind of trees these were, they were so thick that a normal man couldn’t enclose it with their arms. It was so dense that a person could barely go between the trees. Moreover, the leaves blocked most of the sunlight, so that only a few gleams of sunlight were driving the darkness out of the forest.

Haroon thought about going back a few times, but he kept going as he didn’t want to make his effort meaningless. Eventually, he could exit the forest.

“What is this place?”

There was a fog covering the place. What he could see was one thing: black. Everything was black. Fallen trees, dirt, water, everything was dead.

“So this is the Saron Wetland? Yuk! This smell could kill someone!”

It was worse than the drainage of the Mercenary academy. Not just a foul smell, but the air was quite polluted as well, which made Haroon feel dizzy after drawing a few breaths. At least he wasn’t getting poisoned, which meant the poison wasn’t as strong as the drainage.

The earth of the wetland was black, and nothing was on it. Not anything with life. Seeing that scenery made him think of Brat, so he spawned it on stand-by. Strangely, it was able to smell the air even in standby mode.

– “Mas, this smells nice.”

– “‘Smells nice’? Everything is rotting here.”

– “Hehehe. This is enrapturing! This is my favorite smell. Quite strong poisons are piled up, and its sweet scent is driving me crazy!”

Spirits sure do have different tastes.

– “Shit, you call this sweet scent?”

– “Hehehe, my taste isn’t as simple as yours, Mas. There are numerous corrosive poisons made by various corpses rotting, bugs and monsters that eat poisons... Thinking of their juice and texture, it makes me drool. Moreover, this is very nutritious stuff to recover my ability.”

‘What a dirty spirit! Did it starve that much that those rotten and polluted things look delicious? Wait a minute, what if...?’

He remembered that Devron said they will be going over the mountain, around the wetland.

– “Brat, by the way, can you absorb them?”

– “Of course, I can. There are so many of them but with my great and mighty power, it won’t take... uh... I mean it will take some time, but a bit of them? yes.”

– “Is that so...”

A good idea came into Haroon’s mind.

– “So, do you need any E.F.P. or mana when you are absorbing them?”

– “Well, well, it is obvious that you’ll need some mana to summon me, isn’t it? And I am eating a good thing for me, and do you think I will need E.F.P. for that? Why don’t you use your head, Mas?”

– “Oh, Maybe I could use my hands, though.”

Brat shut his mouth.

– “So, all I need is mana for summoning you.”

– “Mmhm. Wait, and you’ll need some antidote.”

Right. It will be no use if his party gets poisoned.

– “But can’t you seal your poison and absorb poisons?”

– “I don’t think so, Mas. You’ll run out of mana pretty fast.”

Haroon wondered why there were so many limitations.

– “Well then, how far away do the others have to be to not get poisoned by you?

– “Hm. Wouldn’t 20 steps be enough, Mas?”

That won’t be a problem. As Haroon and Brat share a mental connection, being 20 steps away won’t be a problem for communication.

– “Ok, would you be able to find a path with poison weak enough for humans?”

– “How can I know now? I’ll have to get there. But that’ll be simple. If there is none, I can make one.”

True, as it can absorb poison. It will be a matter of mana.

– “Alright. Then go out, and see if there is a path, and how long it will take.”

– “Okay!”

“Summon!”

Brat flew into the wetland. Its tail erect, which wasn’t normal to see. It seemed it was absorbing the poison as well, seeing how the fog faded away as it moved, creating a path.

When Haroon was about to run out of mana, Brat came back. Haroon was about to call it anyway, but it somehow knew the timing.

“Mas, this is a really good place.”

“So, was there a path that we could take?”

“Yup. Some places have less dense poison. It is weak enough for humans, but one will need an antidote. It’s quite a distance. It will take about two to three hours for humans. But there are some places where poisons are quite dense.”

“Then, do you think you can absorb those?”

“Of course, I can! Who do you think I am? If you don’t know that much, how are you supposed to be a master of Brat, the pronoun for mighty?”

“I get it, OK?”

Brat was annoying him once again, but he contained himself. He was jealous of Brat having more skill than him, but decided to be satisfied by having a skillful pet.

“Brat, then when I give you a signal later, come out, then find a path with solid, dry ground and make a path for us. Do you think you can do that?”

“Of course. That’s not even a task for the mighty Brat.”

“Good. I’ll call you later, so be quiet for now.”

“Be quick! I can’t wait anymore!” it said, smacking its lips.

Brat’s voice was full of expectation and excitement. Taking an antidote, Haroon thought of his character’s current situation.

“If I only had enough mana, and wouldn’t get poisoned summoning it, then I could be a really OP(overpowered) character. Well, I can see why they made Brat like that: to keep the balance of the game.”

If he didn’t consider that Brat is quite cocky, it was too good for a level 10 user, even if he can only use it for a few seconds.

After taking an antidote to remove the ‘poison’ debuff, Haroon came back to where the party was. It seemed Serinn’s personality helped her to become friends with Briella. The others were having a meal together, with a new face that Haroon couldn’t recognize.

“Mr. Haroon, this man here is Teeno. He is capable of swordsmanship and emergency treatment, but his specialty is finding a path,” Doran introduced the man.

The man beside Doran stood up, and Haroon was surprised that his appearance was far from normal.

“The name’s Haroon. Nice to meet you.”

“Tee, Teeno, you can call me Teeno.”

Teeno was of small stature, close to dwarfs, but his body was balanced. He was as short as Sepia, but there were thick wrinkles on his face. His eyes were shaking, and he couldn’t face anyone directly.

“Teeno will be guiding us to the Viscounty of Paros.”

“Well, thank you. We appreciate your help.”

“Ye-yes, yes...!”

He was stuttering as if he was deeply grateful for Haroon’s warm words.

It wasn’t hard for Haroon to figure out that Teeno had been enslaved for quite a long time. Not only from his subservient behavior, but also from the fact that he didn’t dare to face anyone directly.

Haroon felt pity and anger at the same time. Haroon could see his real-life self in Teeno’s behavior.

“Then, let’s hear from Teeno what route we should take to Paros.”

When Haroon picked up the soup the party left for him, Doran asked Teeno, who had already finished his soup and bread.

“Teeno, tell us what you saw and your thoughts.”

“Yes. First of all, walking around the forest that surrounds Saron Wetland will take about two days to get to the high hill that borders with river Saron. We will be going around the hill. Two more days from there will take us to the opposite side of Saron Wetland from here. From there to Norflox mountains, it will be about 2~3 hours. If we go straight forward from there, we’ll be climbing the mountains on the most gradual slope. Though there might not be a road, climbing will still be easier than taking the road.”

Teeno's eyes were burning bright with passion, unlike when he faces others.

"What are the risks?" Devron asked, finishing his lunch.

"The hill I mentioned earlier is the territory of the brown orcs. If we go through there, we may save a day but we need to avoid their territory. Normally, they won't attack the humans as they learned farming techniques from us, but they are a cruel race who don't appreciate intruders.

"Hmm, so that's why you said we need to go around the hill."

"That's right. But that's not all. Some outer parts of the wetland are the habitats of crocodiles or lizardmen."

"Shit."

Devron swore lightly. He decided to take this path to avoid dangers, but this path was just as dangerous as the other path.

"Then how about taking the path that the Rotems were going to take?"

Doran suggested.

"No. That is a longer way where it takes about 10 days to Hu'gerock, the midpoint from here to the Viscounty of Paros. And that way is much more dangerous than this one. My heart is warning me to avoid that path. Just facing that direction hurts my heart like it is going to burst."

"Is that so? Then that's not even an option."

Doran gave a light sigh. He saw how Haroon was confused, and explained why.

"Oh, sorry! I forgot to mention that Teeno is great at detecting danger. When he faces a great danger, he says that his heart feels like it's going to burst at any second."

Then Haroon and the Quad Wankers could understand Teeno's words. Even in real life, there are people like Teeno. They don't understand why, but by simply not feeling right, they could avoid dangers.

“Hey, short buddy, isn’t there any way to go through the Wetland? It seems like we can save lots of time in that way.”

Asked Gitan, who couldn’t just sit there and wait for them to make a decision. His tone was as if he was talking to a slave.

“No!”

“None!”

Devron and Doran shouted even before Teeno could answer. They looked at each other and gave rather bitter smiles. Devron explained why it would not be an option.

“Saron Wetland is a land with a deep shadow of death. Whatever goes in, never comes out alive.”

“Sound’s like there is a story behind it, right?”

Philip asked, interested.

“Well, they say a Phoenix appeared near this place,” Devron replied.

“A Phoenix? You mean the legendary bird-like creature that’s born from fire and breath fire?”

Briella asked out of curiosity.

“Yes. Although we still don’t know if it exists or not, folks believed that it truly existed. The tale goes back to even before the Empires arose. Well, that’s roughly a thousand years ago, so we don’t have any way to find out if the legend was true or not. The king, or the feudal lord who owned this place, tried to capture the Phoenix to attract public sentiment. He mobilized a strong army for the mission: 6 knightages, a magic corp and an army of 20,000.”

He paused for a second, and continued.

“But not a single body came out from the Wetland. And after that happened, no one ever dared to enter the wetland. This kind of legend was formed because folks back then believed that phoenixes are known to make their nests where no humans can reach. Anyway, It is true that thousands of people who entered the place never came

out, according to what the history says. Nobody knows why they entered, though.”

It sounds more like a made up story to scare kids to stay away from the wetland, rather than a legend. A story just to emphasize to people to prevent them from going into that place. While it was a mere story for Haroon, to Briella, Sepher, and Sepia, it was an interesting legend that an old man delivered.

“Well, how much shorter would the journey be if we could go through the wetland?” Haroon asked Teenoo.

“Wh-while we all agree that’s an impossible thing to do... If we could go through the wetland, it is about two or three day distance from the other end of the wetland to Hu’gerock by walking, so we will be saving roughly 6 days. And there is a much smaller chance to encounter any monsters.”

“That sounds right. There aren’t many monsters around the wetland, as foul smells and poisonous properties were creeping down from the slope. Humans made a natural wall with the forest, but that’s not what monsters could do,” Doran added.

Then Haroon could see how a forest could have formed. It was formed by humans who planted trees to make it act like a windbreaker.

“6 days?” Haroon murmured.

Devron and Doran heard Haroon seriously murmuring the words ‘6 days’ repeatedly.

‘Does he have a way to go through the wetland?’

They both thought for a moment, then shook their heads. It simply wasn’t possible.

“Devron, how much do you trust me?”

“I-I am not sure what you mean, Haroon.”

Devron was not able to remain calm from hearing Haroon’s sudden question out of nowhere. The others found it weird and looked at Haroon.

“Ah, sorry. I asked the wrong question. I know we haven’t built up enough trust yet.”

“Well, Yes, I do trust you, and that’s why we asked you to escort us, don’t you think?”

Devron was nervous that Haroon would withdraw from the quest. He chose this path only because he believed that Haroon’s throwing knife skill could protect them. If he gives up, there wouldn’t be any chance for them.

“I mean, would you trust me if I told you that I have a way to go through the wetland?”

“Wha-WHAT?!”

Everyone jumped up when they heard Haroon’s words.

“I have an ability that can find a safe path through the wetland. Of course, it is your choice to believe me or not.”

Devron couldn’t hide the astonishment from his face, throwing off his emotionless-mask.

“Really? You can find a safe path?”

“Yes, if you trust me, I can lead us through the wetland.”

A deafening silence laid upon the party after hearing Haroon’s confident words. It became a serious concern, as it was a matter of life or death.

“I won’t. I saw your throwing skills, but I cannot trust you on that. How can a Grade-D mercenary possibly do that? That poison and foul smell are already strong enough to make me feel dizzy even from this far.”

It was Hall. She saw Haroon’s skill while she was hiding in the cart with Briella, but it was still hard for her to trust Haroon’s claim. She was the only one to speak up, but the others were agreeing to the fact. Not because Haroon is a grade-D mercenary, but because he is a human being like them.

“I mean, it could be possible. One of our Boss’s ability is Elementalism, so maybe he can find a path by using the spirits.”

Ritrina gave a positive opinion.

“As far as I know, there is no such elementalism related to poison.”

Philip opposed with a look of worry. Philip knew Haroon was good at dealing with sickness, at least good enough to cure their strange disease, but poison was a totally different matter.

“It is not about it being possible or not. If we were to go, we must go as soon as possible or it will get dark when we are still in the middle of the wetland, and that will be troublesome,” said Haroon.

Mixed feelings went through Devron’s and Doran’s eyes.

“True, we need to decide now.”

“Doran, what do you think of this?”

“You know well that I would gladly follow your decision. But I have to say, from what I have seen so far, Haroon is not the kind of person who would eat his own words.”

Devron nodded. His mind wasn’t so different from Doran’s. Devron knew that Haroon was something else, seeing how Philip was calling Haroon ‘Boss’, even though he is older.

“Fair enough. We are counting on you. I will entrust you with my life.”

Finally, Devron made a hard decision. The others seemed nervous, but the decision was made, so they swiftly prepared to continue the journey.



“Mr. Haroon, take some of these.”

“What are these?”

When the party entered the forest, Teeno handed Haroon something. It was small, rounded pills, and it had a delicate scent.

“Those are antidotes I prepared, just in case.”

“Antidotes?”

Haroon smelled it. It had quite a refreshing scent. It seemed like there was something added that wasn't included in Hector's antidotes.

“Are these made with Syaltano?”

“Ho-how do you know that name?”

Teeno jumped when he heard the name ‘Syaltano’ from Haroon's mouth. Syaltano was one of the rare herbs that weren't known to the public. Haroon smiled back.

“I know a few recipes of medical remedies. Among the recipes that my herbalism teacher taught me, there were some antidotes that had an ingredient named Syaltano. He was upset that he hasn't seen it with his own eyes, though.”

Hector used to say that he could add a refreshment to the antidote, and it would make the user feel more energy in their body.

“Who made these?” Haroon asked.

“It's a bit embarrassing to say, but I made these myself.”

Haroon was surprised to hear that. Maybe Teeno was a greater man than he thought.

“I made them prior to coming as we were moving along the wetland, anyway.”

“Well, that's one less risk, thanks to you.”

“B-but, you know, because it only lasts for an hour...”

He couldn't finish the sentence like he'd done a bad thing. He really was an innocent man.

“No, but it is good enough to be a great help.”

“That's a relief then.”

With a light heart, Teeno went to the others to hand out his antidotes.

When they were out of the forest and was about to enter the wetland, Haroon told the party to take an antidote in prior. The party was surprised by the strong, poisonous smell and took an antidote or potion.

“I will be searching for the path, so take the exact path I take, but make sure you are far enough from me so I won’t get distracted. About 20 steps would be enough.”

Haroon turned away from the rest of the party and summoned Brat with a low voice.

“Brat, Come out!”

“MUHAHAHA! Dinner time!”

It smiled, shaking its tail. But its smile came to Haroon as a warning to take an antidote. The UI sound alerted that he has been poisoned.

“Ok, then, find the path we talked about, and while you are moving, absorb the poison so all of us can move without getting poisoned. You can do that, right?”

“Hehe. Of course, Mas. Who do you think I am? I’ll show you the mighty power of an Essential spirit. Hehehe, poison! Poison everywhere!”

“Then, lead the way.”

Slowly flapping its four pairs of wings, it twitched its nose several times and started moving.

“Okay, Follow me.”

Although Haroon knew Brat is an expert with poison, he was worried about it being messy, so he followed it with some distance.

Haroon was getting almost no poison damage from Brat as they had quite some distance between them. Also, as it seems he is not getting poisoned in this way, so he didn’t need to worry about the poison anymore.

Brat looked for the route with less dense poison, and moved, sometimes turning right and left. The others were busy enough from dealing with the fear of poison, but

Haroon could feel the refreshing air, and by that, he knew that Brat was working diligently.

The thing that Haroon thought was a mere fog turned out to be a colorless poisonous cloud. Going into the cloud without any hesitation, Brat absorbed as much as he wanted and made a large path.

Since the forest was blocking the wind from the outer areas, the path remained long enough for them to pass. The party, excluding Haroon and Brat, was nervous and scared of going through the land of death, and their hearts were pumping like crazy, but it slowed down as the time went by. They were still nervous, but as Haroon proved his ability to be true, they were not scared of getting poisoned anymore. Soon, they were able to realize that there wasn't any fog where Haroon went.

As there was no flow of air, and the path was wide; ideally they should not be concerned about their safety, but their hearts weren't feeling so calm. Running away from the fear of poison, the party moved faster and faster, and soon, they grouped together and moved closer to Haroon. Now the rest of the party was just 10 steps away from Haroon.

Haroon unsummoned Brat before his mana ran out. With the amount of mana his character could hold, he could not maintain Brat summoned for more than 9 minutes. Fortunately, Brat had already moved so far that the party could move without it for a while.

No matter how the others saw the surroundings, Haroon could easily find the passage that Brat made. Some parts of it didn't have a solid ground and the party sometimes had to wet their ankles, but that was all. Whenever they had to go through large and small puddles, those were detoxified and were safe to cross.

They had already walked for two hours, but the journey in the wetland didn't seem to end soon. As the people were on alert, only following Haroon, they started to get tired. So Haroon stopped at a flat boulder that the party could rest on.

"Let's take a rest here."

At Haroon's call, everyone gave a deep sigh of relief. Although they knew they were safe from the poisons, there was no way for them to not be nervous about going right through them. After all, the wetland was popular for being a land of death.

“You never stop impressing me. How can you even find a path in a place like this? Hall told me you’ve spawned a spirit from seeing the mana flow.....” said Devron.

Devron’s face was full of astonishment, as if he gave up on playing emotionless with Haroon.

“Well, Yes, it is related with elementalism... but I don’t know how to put it in words.”

Just as Devron taught him indirectly, Haroon decided to hide the source of the ability.

“If it is not an Elemental, what is it? It doesn’t seem like you’ve got an Artifact, and I don’t see anything peculiar other than regularly taking mana potions, but you still find a safe path. That’s really intriguing.”

Not only Devron, but Doran and Teeno were watching him with admiration. Hall, who is a magician, was now watching him differently too. Especially, Teeno’s eyes were full of admiration and respect. It was not as much as the rest of the party, but the Quad Wankers were interested as well.

“Whatever the method is, it seems you have to use lots of mana.”

“Yes, more than I was expecting.”

Haroon nodded. He already drank 4 low-quality mana potions. He had 10 that the Quad Wankers gave him. He had mid-quality potions that Tain gave him, but he hesitated to use them.

Devron stared at Haroon for a while, then he called Hall.

“Hall, get me some mana pots.”

“Yes, sir.”

On Devron’s order, Hall took some glass bottles out from her bag and handed it to Devron.

“These are mid-quality pots. They will be handy in a situation like this.”

Devron took 4 potions from her hands and handed them to Haroon. Hall was shaking her hands when she saw that, but Devron didn't pay it any attention.

'Well, I don't refuse things like this,' Haroon thought

Just like what Bell said, the color of the mid-quality mana potion was silver. Brewed with Troll's blood, hundreds of miscellaneous ingredients and divinity, they were effective enough to refill the mana pool of circle 3-magicians in a few seconds.

With just one gulp, Haroon chugged the potion. While he was enjoying the peculiar taste of the potion, a refreshing feeling spread to his body.

[Your mana is fully regenerated]

He was glad to hear that. He could feel that his body and mind was being filled with something that wasn't a physical power. It was impressive to see how mid-quality potions can make mana regenerate this fast, unlike how slowly mana regenerates after taking a low-quality one.

"It was very effective! My mana is at full already!" said Haroon.

Devron laughed when he saw Haroon's surprised face.

"Well, that's a good thing. I wonder how you've got such a surprising ability."

Haroon wasn't sure if that was a compliment or an indirect insult.

Anyway, According to Bell, the effect of mana potions would consist even when his mana is at full. This meant the mana will still be regenerating whenever he spends it, as much as the effectiveness of the potion. Thinking about it, Haroon understood how valuable those potions were, so he handed back the 3 remaining potions.

But Devron didn't accept them.

"Just have it with you, and use them whenever you need to. You are the only mercenary who doesn't even bring a proper potion on his journey," said Devron.

So Haroon put them back in his inventory.

“Well, we were in quite a rush, so... Thank you, anyway.”

Haroon saw the Quad Wankers looking at him quite offensively, but simply ignored them. What is wrong with accepting gifts, and when they are such valuable items? Not even a fool would do that.

After a while, Haroon went ahead and summoned Brat after putting some distance between him and the rest of the party.

“So, how was it?”

“Hehe! I’m so happy to have a full belly, Mas.”

“Well, have some more.”

“Yes, Mas!”

Brat’s voice was full of loyalty, not the usual cockiness.

‘I mean, is it that good? What a dirty spirit it is.’ he thought.

He kept walking, followed by the others who were not as nervous as before.

The effectiveness of the mid-quality potion was amazing. He rested for two more times, but his mana was still full. Also because his mana pool was quite small, but mostly because the effectiveness of the mana potion was something else.

They ate pre-made sandwiches for lunch¹ and moved again. When Haroon took another mid-quality potion, they were out of the wetland.

‘Damn! What a waste!’

He was too late to realize that he didn’t need to take a mid-quality one, only if he pushed his body to the limit.

When the party was stepping on green grass once again, that’s when they were able to feel relieved.

“You’ve done a great job. I know it’s a bit tiring, but let’s get to the bottom of the

mountain today. We might be able to get to the Viscounty castle in just 10 days,” said Devron, tapping Haroon’s shoulders.

With Haroon’s help, he was able to save 6 days. Not only that, the party was able to avoid encountering any monster. That already meant a lot. With light footsteps, the party continued moving towards the Norflox Mountains.

It was still early in the evening, but the party decided to sleep right after pitching their tent. Not only were they bringing two kids, but they were tired from being on full guard in the wetland and they had forced a march to the mountain. They were mentally, and physically tired.

‘Finally! This would be a good time to check the items,’ Haroon thought.

After making sure that Philip and Gitan were sleeping, Haroon opened his status window. As it was his first time checking his status window after slaying the bandits, Haroon was expecting much from it.

Name: Haroon
Race: Human
Class: –
Level: 10
Title: Mercenary guild leader (and 4 others)
Health Points: 490
Mana Points: 500
E.F.P.: 350
Strength: 48(+15) Stamina: 39
Wisdom: 22 Intellect:40
Luck: 27 Agility: 33(+12)
Sustenance: 13 E.S.P.: 8
Focus: 16 S.P.: 83
Fame: 600 Leadership: 250
Fire Resistance: +10%
Magic Resistance: +10%

He had gained 100 Elemental Force Points from keeping Brat summoned, and he had earned enough Soul Points from killing the Bandits to get a class. He realized he had

more S.P.s than he thought. Unlike how the U.I. tells players how much S.P.s they got from killing the Boss monsters, gaining one or two points were not alerted.

“Skill Window.”

Passive Skill

Sense Sword: Basic Lv.1(92.00%)/Lv.10

Active Skills²

Spirit Guided Throwing Knives: Basic Lv.1(7.23%)/Lv.5

Spirit Integrated Throwing Knives: Intermediate Lv.1(51.02%)/Lv.5

Emergency Treatment: Basic Lv.1(2.50%)/Lv.3

Compound Cure: Basic Lv.1(2.30%)/Lv.5

Trap placement and removal: Lv.1(3:00%)/Lv.3

Summoning Brat several times gained a good amount of experience for both throwing skills. Fighting in combat with his sword gained him a lot of experience, so he was about to get a level up for Sense Sword.

Feeling glad, Haroon opened his inventory. There was the 100 gold he earned as bounty. Next, while being satisfied by touching the leather sack that Tain gave him, he turned his eyes to the other slots and looked for the items.

Just as he thought, they were full of new items. Haroon took them out one by one. He cringed his face, and eventually, screamed.

Wide and flat leaves

– Dried. Ready for ‘wiping’

Underwears

– It’s got some foul smell. Seems like it’s not been washed for years

Foot coverings

– Full of vicious germs that causes athlete’s feet.

A Leash

- Worn out. Seems like it won't be useful.

Women's underwear

- Smelly. Discolored.

A will of a bandit.

- Written by a bandit who doesn't know how to write.

Broken copper shortsword

Durability: 0/15

One step away from being broken

Half of a wig

- Used by a bald bandit

Boulder (10Kg)

- Everyone thinks it might be gold at first glance.

Hard bread

- Covered with mold. Not even pigs would dare to eat it.

Medicine for hemorrhoids

- Actually for constipation

A stick

- Was used yesterday to make a fire

Wolf's penis

- Dried. Someone actually died from this

Bones

- There is still some meat on it.
-

“What the hell are all these?”

This was absurd. He couldn't even imagine why these kinds of items would be

dropped. Stunned by the situation, Haroon was watching in the blank sky for a while. Soon, his eyes were burning with flames.

“Those dirty bandits! Is THIS what you ROBBED people for? Damn it.”

To be generous, he could understand if he only killed mere pawns. But he has killed two bosses in that fight. There were still no useful items at all.

“This is ridiculous! There is no way there wouldn’t be any good items!”

What a relief that everyone was sleeping. If they caught Haroon shouting and freaking out like this, they wouldn’t want to face Haroon anymore. As Haroon’s hands moved inside his inventory, searching for items, Brat’s body started shaking quite violently.

“Oh, damn, my luck!”

While shouting in anger, Haroon noticed Brat in the corner of his inventory.

‘Wait a minute...’

Haroon summoned Brat on stand-by mode.

– “BRAT!”

– “Mas-Master. I’m sorry.”

Its voice was full of fear. Haroon was just suspecting it, but now he was sure it must have done something. He got really angry. It was bad enough that it was being cocky, and now it was reaching its hands on his items. Even if he would die from the poison, he couldn’t let Brat get away from this.

“Summon!”

Its body was shaking violently. Now Haroon was 100% sure.

“Let’s do the talking after some punches.”

“Wa-wait! Mas, You definitely told me you would let me eat those, and w-why are you making scary faces now?”

As if it knew there wouldn't be any talking even after some punching, its voice was trembling with fear. Haroon put his strength in his fists, but hesitated putting it in action, thinking of what Brat just said.

"You said you would give me the items from those bastards."

"When?"

Even though he questioned it, Haroon could remember agreeing to its request to feed it delicious items from the bandits.

"You definitely did."

It looked at Haroon with a face of innocence, cringing its already cringed face.

"Of course that doesn't mean... Argh!"

Some curses were about to burst out from his mouth, but he shut his eyes instead. Like Brat said, it was Haroon who allowed Brat to take the items. As it seemed Haroon was calming down, Brat kept talking, still trembling in his voice.

"Since I am an Essential S-spirit, I need to absorb mana, the origin of every matter, to grow. I already had enough time being weak, sealed in the drainage and being a pet of you, and I grew even weaker because I had to force enhancing your skill. I want a subspace, and I want to use some cool skills too."

Haroon held his anger inside, and asked it for more details. He had some idea about what happened with his skills, but he wanted to hear more about it from Brat.

"You forced enhancing my skill? What do you mean by that?"

"When you master your skill, Spirit Guided Throwing Knives, it evolves into the skill Spirit Integrated Throwing Knives. But your will was way too strong, and you've used all my strength and force-evolved your skill, and by result, my ability got so low now!"

Haroon could trust his claim. He, too, has been thinking that he got a too great of a skill at his level, and too easily.

Even considering his stats which was above the average, that skill was way too overpowered. Although he could use it for only a few seconds, it was a very strong move that others would pay anything to get.

“So I ate some items that were well crafted with the craftsman’s care and effort. Only those items have pure mana. Of course, I’ve eaten lots of poison in Saron Wetland, but that simply isn’t enough.”

Haroon felt so bitter that he couldn’t speak anymore. Everything was just karma because of his actions. He blamed his old self, willing to death to get the Orc Warrior. Because of that, all of this happened.

“So, did you get enough of it?”

“We-well, I think I need just a little bit more. I’ve got enough poison, but I need more different types of mana. By items, maybe a couple of unique items.”

Haroon couldn’t hide his astonishment and dropped his jaw. Not just rares, not uncommons, but it needed two, Unique, items.

From the information that Bell gave Haroon, he knew no unique items were obtained by the players. He wanted to ask about the specs of the items Brat ate, but decided not to. If he found out, he wasn’t sure of how he would react.

“I need to rank up too, don’t you think? Then I will be able to open a subspace, and I will be able to use more effective skills. Shouldn’t a skillful pet be nearby you so you won’t have to be concerned about being weak?”

“Shoot, go back to your place!”

Holding the curses and swears inside, Haroon struck the back of its head and unsummoned it. The burning anger had left him, and only a feeling of emptiness remained. Nothing was free, but it was a matter of being lucky or not.

‘Damn it! I need money to live on, and I need to get items for this con-like spirit!’

To be honest, He wouldn’t have come this far without Brat. He has always been mean to him, but that was only for his cockiness, not his personal feelings. He was actually feeling thankful, rather than anger.

'I guess that's what it takes to be strong. I guess I'll need to go look for dungeons when I get a class and help Jinsoo revenging that wretched girl.'

What a dramatic night.

Chapter 10

Impending Danger

The party climbed Norflox Mountains on the slope where it wasn't so steep. They needed to rest quite often since Briella and the two kids had weak stamina, but they were able to reach the top of the ridge in just one day. They needed to take antidotes once in awhile as they were poisoned by the wind carried from the wetland, however they didn't encounter any monsters.

Teeno was really good at finding the path. He was able to navigate just by observing how the trees were lying or how dense the grasses were; and he was quick at spotting traces of beasts that normal people wouldn't even notice.

With his experienced guiding, it didn't even take two days for them to reach the point where they could see Hu'gerock. Just like Teeno said, this path was 6 days faster than the path that the Rotems took.

Hu'gerock was just a huge rock like the name suggested. Like a potato stuck on the tip of a knife, the big boulder was resting on a thin rock. The scene was quite remarkable.

"We will be arriving at the Viscounty of Paros in just 5 days," said Teeno.

"It's been a smooth journey so far, thanks to you, Teeno."

Devron encouraged Teeno who was wiping his sweat with his sleeves. Everyone in the party knew how good of a pathfinder Teeno was, considering how they did not encounter any monsters yet.

"No-not at all," said Teeno.

Teeno was delighted and waved his hands. He couldn't handle that situation, so he headed to Doran and Serinn to help them prepare food. He was quite the diligent man, who always tries to help the party, even when they were resting.

"Haroon, how much longer do we need to walk?"

Sepia asked, washing her face with the water she scooped up earlier from the stream. Her face was messed with sweat and dirt.

“Hang tight. I know it is tiring, but 5 more days, and we’ll be at the Viscounty of Paros.” Haroon replied.

But for a ten year old girl, it was really impressive that she managed to follow the adults on a journey like this. He knew that if his old self was in a similar situation, he would’ve already given up.

“But my legs hurt.”

They would. Walking on the mountain is quite tiring work for legs and knees as the slope always changes, and they vary quite often.

“Well, come and sit here.”

Haroon gave a leg massage to Sepia as he had nothing else to do. It has only been two weeks since he graduated the mercenary training basic course, but it felt like it was ages ago. Sepia even shed tears as she felt pain from the legs, but soon the massage helped relaxing her tensed muscles which made her feel more comfortable... With eyes shut, she enjoyed getting massaged, and at some point, she fell asleep. Haroon felt sorry to see a girl in her age that had so big muscles on her slim legs.

“Sepher, why don’t you come here too?”

“Welp, I’m fine. And you must be tired too...”

Despite what his mouth was saying, he was already sitting next to Haroon. He saw how much Sepia enjoyed the massage.

“You need to relax your muscles more often as you are growing fast at your age. If you want to be a knight, remember this massage and do it to yourself often.”

“Okay.”

His weakness was the word ‘knight’. Doran’s childhood dream was to become a knight, so he wanted the same for Sepher. But it’s not like how it sounds, as Sepher himself

wanted to be a knight too, and he had been working hard to become one.

Sepher soon fell asleep while receiving Haroon's massage, with a smile on his face. Haroon was pleased to see the two kids taking a good nap.

[You have learned a new skill – Massage!]

Haroon was startled to hear the sudden UI sound, and opened his skill window.

Massage – Basic Lv.1(6%)/Lv.3

Massage with extra care and precision to relieve pain and fatigue. It also causes Health points and mana points to regenerate faster. Giving a massage to injured people grants them a small boost to natural healing. With a higher level, this skill gives an extra boost of health regeneration upon casting.

‘Well, I didn’t know such a skill exists.’

It was very interesting, and joyful to see a skill that makes a life more alive, unlike how most of his skills harms one’s life. He was pleased to see this kind of skill as he had been worried about being emotionless about harming other people.

‘And I didn’t know ESP works on massage too.’

ESP was mainly affecting his passive skill ‘Sense Sword’, but he found out that it was quite useful when giving someone a massage. With that, he was able to find the spots of the muscle that were more tense, and how to relieve them.

Serinn saw the kids sleeping and made a suspicious smile.

“Boss!”

“WHY!”

Haroon knew that she was going to say something absurd, seeing how she made her unique nasal sound.

“My legs hurts too.”

“Why don’t you do it on your own?!”

“My arms hurts too so I can’t do it myself. What should I do?”

“Well, I know what to do.”

“Then, please.”

Serinn seemed satisfied from his answer. She made a sexy smile with bleary eyes.

“Hey, Gitan! Massage her legs.”

Gitan was talking with Philip about something, and when Haroon called him and said something that he didn’t expect, he opened his eyes wide and jumped up.

“Huh? What was that, Boss?”

Serinn realized what just happened and burst with anger.

“I’m fine! Who told you I want to get massaged by an ogre?”

Serinn went back while complaining. Following her, Gitan nagged about giving her a massage, and later, he even begged.

‘So Gitan likes Serinn, huh, I had no idea!’ Haroon thought. ‘That’s another thing I can make use of. Hehehe!’

“Oh! I’m sorry if the kids bothered you.”

It was Doran, ready with food.

“Let them sleep for a while. It will relieve their tiredness. We can save some food and give it to them later,” said Haroon.

That made Doran smile.

“Thank you for caring about my kids. With you around, my kids have been brighter

than usual.”

Doran’s eyes were full of gratitude. As he wasn’t able to take care of his kids in this situation, he was feeling grateful to Haroon.

To Doran, Haroon seemed like a skillful mercenary, a mysterious man that he couldn’t describe in words. This made him forget that Haroon was just a grade-D mercenary. Haroon was a man that he could trust. Haroon was treating his kids like his own biological siblings.

“Well, I came to say that the dinner is ready,” Doran added.

“Sounds great!”

Haroon joined Serinn and Ritrina who were serving the food. Philip and Gitan, who were talking with Devron, already found a place to sit. Briella and Hall were coming out of their tent.

It happened when Ritrina handed Haroon a bowl of soup. As the curtain of darkness was covering the sky, he felt an unusual movement behind him.

‘Hmm?’

It seemed massaging the kids has activated his ESP stats, so he was a bit more sensitive than usual. He definitely felt something approaching cautiously. As the journey had gone smooth so far, and because it was dinner time, the others were relaxed, and couldn’t have noticed whatever was behind him.

Carefully putting the bowl on the ground, Haroon withdrew three throwing knives. Hall, too, grabbed her sword, as she noticed something weird as well. When Devron and Philip acted confused upon seeing how they were acting strangely, Haroon turned his body around and threw three knives at lightning-speed with his hands.

With the slightest change in the movement of his fingers, the knives flew with different speed and angle, and cut through the darkness.

“*Kugh!*”

“Urgh!”

“Yikes!”

Three low cries came out from behind the tree that was 20 steps away from them.

“Ready your weapons!” Devron shouted.

Drawing his sword, Devron jumped up and ran towards the forest. Philip and Gitan followed suit, and only after that, Doran threw away his bowl of soup while drawing his sword. Hall, too, drew her rapier out and hid Briella behind her. Serinn and Ritrina stood next to her. Teeno hurriedly ran towards where the kids were, and drew some kind of skewer from his legs.

Devron had already swung his sword, and it struck the weapon that the unknown enemy was holding. The silhouette stumbled, but soon recovered the balance. Whoever he was, he was no match for Devron, but it also meant he wasn’t a mere bandit.

“Reveal yourself!” Said Devron

“Well, Well! You’ve done well avoiding our eyes and ears. I never thought you’d make it this far. We almost lost your track,” replied the enemy.

Devron noticed a silver, moon-shaped symbol on the chestplate of the enemy.

“The Silver Moon, is it?” Devron asked.

“Ho, you know that much? Now you’ve made me curious who you really are. I was pretty sure there were no other forces with her, and this gramp showed up out of nowhere!”

“Why is the Silver moon here, instead of rotting in the darkness?”

“Huhu! I’m pretty sure you have a good idea about it. But I’ll let you know that we are interested in that little girl over there.”

The man with silver colored armor seemed about 40 years old. From the way he talked, the party knew that he had many people working under his order.

“With that poor skill?”

“Well, This should be enough, don’t you think?”

With his words, a reasonable number of knights came out of the forest. Devron cringed his face upon seeing them. About 20 knights came out of the forest. Three of them were bleeding on their face or neck, hurt by Haroon’s throwing knives.

“You brought a whole squad,” Devron cried.

“Yes, and that’s why I was surprised to find out that you came this far. We’ve got other squads ready here and there, and still, you avoided them all. If gamma squad hadn’t smashed the dregs named Rotem or whatever, we wouldn’t have known that you were heading to Hu’gerock.”

“Damn it!”

Misery appeared on Devron’s face. No matter how well they fought, they wouldn’t be able to fight 20 Expert Knights. There was no time for him to hire skilled people. After all, it was his plan to move as a small group, so there were no need for them to hire more people. Even if he did, it wouldn’t be a match to Silver Moon, one of Top 5 of more than 20 Royal Knightages.

“Ah, excuse me. I’m Viscount Alphi. My pleasure to meet you.”

Thinking Devron’s party as rats in the trap, Alphi greeted with ease. Devron didn’t reply, and it annoyed him. He was so conceited that that simple action hurt his pride.

“And I kept my manners to show you my gratitude for kicking those officious incompetent knights and coming all the way here to give us all the credit! See what I get in return! You ill-mannered people are not worthy of my time.”

‘So the Rotems and the merchants are no more. And however the situation is going, these guys are the last ones.’

From Viscount Alphi’s words, Haroon deduced that this pod of enemies are the last ones that form the siege ring, looking for Briella.

‘Then we need to make a first strike,’ Haroon thought.

There were no time to wait for Devron's order.

"But you know, we are the knights with manners. We'll offer you the chance to surrender. We still have to kill you all, except one, but I promise that it will be clean, quick and without any pain."

Hiding behind Devron and Doran, Haroon withdrew some knives without making any sound, and summoned Brat. The UI sound told him that he got poisoned, but there was no time to deal with it. Haroon summoned Brat as quietly as possible.

"Brat, put poisons on the knives."

"Hehehe! Sounds great! Let's do this!"

"Try to make it bounce on the impact, so each knife can hit more than one enemy. We can't leave anyone alive."

"Who do you think I am? You? Don't worry about it, and just take some antidotes. 'Cause my poison got even stronger."

"Spirit guided throwing knives! Go!"

Haroon swung his arms, throwing 3 knives in each direction. Knives flew so fast that one couldn't tell which one was thrown first. Brat has already put poison on the blades, and it would change its direction on impact.

With Haroon's words, Devron started attacking Viscount Alphi. He sensed the knives passing him. He felt at ease in his mind, as he realized there was no other choice. Haroon's preemptive attack helped him to clear his mind.

But there was a reason why they call Experts, Experts. They sensed the throwing knives, and parried them with their swords. However, that wasn't the end.

"Argh!"

"Kugh!"

"Po- Poison!"

The knights were surrounding the party, making a semi-circle shape. Among them, two knights fell on the ground grabbing their necks, and another one fell with violent convulsion. As they were standing next to each other, the knives that they parried has bounced off to others, and struck where their bare skins was exposed. But they didn't know that it was what Brat planned.

"How dare you attack while someone is talking, you sneaky bastards!"

Viscounty Alpho couldn't resist the anger, and shouted. He put mana in his sword. Soon enough, a blue aura covered the blade, and an aura blade the size of a palm was formed at the tip of the blade. It was the aura sword, that was popular for being able to cut every matter in the world.

But Devron was a formidable swordsman as well. His sword, too, formed an aura blade about the same size that Alpho had made. The only difference was that Devron's aura was more yellow, than blue.

"You despicable bastards!" Alpho shouted, and started swinging his sword.

"You Fool! What's the use of talking about being sneaky in the matter of life and death!"

"Still!"

"*Gah!*"

Devron thrust his sword to attack Alpho's chest.

Alpho knew he would easily win this battle. But when the actual battle broke, he realized that wasn't the case. Not only did Devron have more strength and mana injected into his sword, Alpho simply couldn't keep up the pace. He began to slowly retreat...

"Yikes! You gramp...!"

Alpho bit his lips and tried his best, but Devron's feet and sword went faster and faster. Devron's fast sword dance that cut into openings before Alpho could even swing just once made Alpho's blood curdle.

The knights realized that Devron wasn't an easy person to deal with, despite how old he looks. Three more knights joined to help Alpo. They also had aura blades formed on the tip of their swords, although it was quite a bit shorter than Alpo's or Devron's.

The swords struck together, but Devron didn't lose the fight. Devron's quick feet and sword was light and as fast as the wind, but the impact was as heavy as rocks. The four knights couldn't handle Devron's sword dance.

"This monstrous gramp! I've never heard of such a thing!"

Viscount Alpo couldn't understand. 3 low-level Experts and a mid-level Expert was attacking together, and still the old man in front of them wasn't losing, but was actually pressing them. The old man had the eyes of an eagle, insight to prevent them attacking, and the sword dance that moves as if it would cut everything that blocks its way. Alpo couldn't understand how he had never heard of such a man.

"Daten and I will join Sir Alpos. The others stop them from escaping!"

One of the knights ordered, so Haroon replied with his order.

"Doran, Teeno, get the kids! Philip and Gitan, open a path behind! Serinn, Ritrina, run away with Briella! Hall, Mist! Devron, into the forest!"

Fortunately, although it was a shout in the midst of great hurry, everyone understood his words. While Philip and Gitan fought with the knights to open a path for the party, Doran and Teeno ran to hold the kids up and ran into the forest.

Devron too, made a giant swing forcing the knights only to defend, and used the aftershock to jump backwards. After kicking the ground hard, his body flipped backwards. Devron saw how Hall was not moving as she couldn't keep up with how fast the situation changed.

"Quick!" Devron shouted.

And it helped Hall to wake up from her daze.

"Mist!"

Quickly casting the magic, Hall lifted Briella up in her arms. Briella, too, was in a daze

seeing how Haroon opened up a chance with his throwing knives, once again. Hall ran into the forest with Serinn and Ritrina.

“YOU BASTARDS!”

Alpho roared out of anger. First, he lost his three underlings from the daggers, and next, he suffered from an old man that he didn’t even know the name of. His eyes were burning with anger. But he still had more to suffer from frustration, as he didn’t get to move even a step.

“Brat, Poison. *Spirit guided Throwing Knives!*”

8 knives left Haroon’s hand, controlled by Brat. As they headed toward the knights, the knights who were about to chase the party had to stop. It was easy for them to prepare themselves to parry the knives no matter how fast they were as they saw it coming. But as the knives weren’t just ordinary knives, they didn’t just bounced off but gained more momentum and shot to the sides.

Leaving Brat to guide the knives, Haroon took an antidote and mana potion, and followed the others to escape from the site. He could hear some screams from behind, and it sounded like two of them got hit.

“What the heck happened? Who the damned are they?” Alpho shouted from the distance.

After entering the forest full of fog, Haroon threw some knives again. It wasn’t an effective way to attack them, but it helped to distract the knights from chasing. Since they knew Haroon was using poison, they had to move cautiously, and it earned enough time for the party to gain some distance. Throwing daggers a few more times, Haroon ran away in earnest. Soon, he was able to catch up to the party. At first, he could hear the armors clattering. The knights slowed down because of the fog, weight of the armor, and fear of the poison, so the clattering sound soon faded away.



Teeno was able to find a way to escape even in the dim moonlight. He didn’t exactly learn any swordsmanship, but he still had sharp eyes that he was born with, and experience he had from the numerous years he lived. After running for an hour, they stopped by a giant waterfall. Everyone was soaked in sweat.

“This, place, should be, safe, for, now,” said Teeno, catching his breath.

At Teeno’s words, they collapse on the bare ground. They didn’t care if it was bare ground or not. Haroon, too, breathed deeply, listening to his rapid heartbeat. He realized how tired his body was. It should have been obvious, but he didn’t feel that way when he was running away.

“Hall, hand them some potions.”

“Yes, sir.”

Hall was feeling better than the others, at least. Ritrina, Serinn, and Hall carried Briella in turns, so they were not as tired as the male members, as they had to run with the bags.

She took some potions out of her bag and handed them to everyone. Because it was made by magicians, not by the Temple, it was not as effective as the ones Haroon had before, but it was good enough for the party to recover stamina and health. They were able to feel the energy filling their body comfortably.

“You owe us an explanation,” said Philip to Devron, with a serious face.

They knew Devron wasn’t just an ordinary old man, but when they found Devron was actually a mid-level expert, it came as a great curiosity to them.

“What he said. What in the blazes was that about?”

Hot tempered Ritrina seemed quite angry. Haroon looked at Devron without any words.

“As you might have noticed, there are some people who doesn’t appreciate our existence. To be exact, Briella is their target,” said Devron.

He paused for a bit, looking at the Quad Wanker’s faces, and continued.

“I can’t explain everything now, but I will tell you this. The enemy have quite a lot of power, and we are related to the Royal family. And I can guarantee that you won’t get in trouble if we arrive at our destination.”

Devron shut his mouth after that. They knew that he wouldn't talk about it anymore.

"Alright. We knew it wouldn't be an easy task as the reward you promised us was quite excessive, but it could have been better if you had told us more about it. We were quite astonished back then," Haroon replied.

Devron opened his mouth upon hearing Haroon's words, with an excuse reflected on his face.

"I'm truly sorry. That was only because I knew nothing good will happen if you get deeply involved with her. Please understand that I had no other intention."

At least that seemed true. Haroon never found them suspicious.

"By the way, who are you really? From the length of your aura blade, you seem to be over mid-level Expert," Philip asked.

Devron shut his eyes. Philip knew that many knights have reached such a level. But he also knew that there are not many swordsmen who reached that level other than knights, not even a chance when it comes to the one who are more skilled than a member of the royal knightages. If Devron is a mercenary, he would be over grade-A mercenary. Devron finally opened his mouth.

"I will tell you when we get to the destination. Nothing good will befall you if you'd know the details, so be patient until then."

So they couldn't ask anymore. They scattered and looked for a place to sleep.

"I owe you once again."

Devron came, wiping his sweat.

"It's only because they were careless."

"But I really can't understand your throwing knife skill. I know you said you have used a spirit's power, but how can a knife bounce off like that? And how can you throw poisoned daggers with bare hands?"

Devron was confused.

“By the way, what are we going to do now?”

As Haroon changed the subject, Devron’s face stiffened for a second.

“Hmm, well. We gotta believe in Teeno’s skill for now. He needs to find a path, more concealed than the others.”

Attempting on a frontal breakthrough wasn’t an option.

“They will try to surround us, using the feudal lord around this place. It is fortunate that we are in the middle of the Norflox mountains, which means it will be hard for them to find us,” said Doran.

Devron and Haroon nodded.

“They must have stopped chasing us, as the night is getting deeper and deeper. We need to take some rest too,” said Teeno.

So Devron ordered at Teeno’s words.

“Like Teeno said, let’s get some sleep, even if it is going to be for just a few hours. They won’t be able to chase us in a night like this.

The party felt hungry as their dinner got ruined. They couldn’t even make a fire, or they would get spotted. Instead, they ate some bread and jerkies to soothe their stomachs, and slept for a while.



They got up before the sunrise, and left the waterfall. Briella seemed okay, but the other two kids seemed quite tired. But this was not the time to take care of kids.

Teeno found a way through boulders and trees. He said it was the path that the wild animals use. Although they had higher chance to meet the beasts, it was safe from humans. It wasn’t easy for them to take it, but nobody complained or showed tiredness. Without any words, they followed Teeno, preparing for any situation. Though, they knew the chase had been cut-off sometime ago.

They met some monsters like Orcs and saber-tooth tigers. They couldn't avoid the party's swords. Hall seemed quite frustrated about the situation, and she didn't hesitate to kill them. In fact, she was the first one who drew her sword whenever they met monsters, even though she was just hired as a bodyguard of Briella.

Following the path for 3 more days, deeply into the middle of the mountain, they were able to reach the point where they could see Viscounty castle of Paros.

"And that's Sordan River and Sordan field. We could say it is the last gate to castle Paros."

Everyone's face brightened up from Teeno's words. A river that seemed over 100 steps wide, and wide fields beyond the river came into their eyesight. There was a wooden bridge built over it, and a road, directly heading to their destination.

"We will be safe inside the Viscounty of Paros," said Doran.

Haroon nodded. There was no need for him to ask why it would be so.

"The problem is, there might be knights laying in ambush near the bridge. We can already see a guard post over there."

Doran was pointing at a temporary guard post built at the beginning of the bridge. It was quite a distance, but Haroon could see numerous people guarding it.

That wasn't all. He looked over the riverside, and there were soldiers posted at regular intervals alongside it.

"Sun Guards? That's the symbol of the Sun Guard Knightage!"

It was Philip. He was pointing at the symbol on the shields that the knights were holding. The party could see the knights preparing their food.

"Holy shit! First Silver Moons, and now Sun Guards?"

Gitan drew a deep breath. Gitan originally wanted to be a knight, unlike his father who is a mercenary. There was no way for him to not recognize one of the most famous knightages.

As Haroon didn't know the name of the Sun Guard Knightage, he was feeling calm as he didn't know what it meant, but the others were not feeling the same way. Swords of Darkness. This was the other name for Silver Moons as their enemies were found dead the next morning. Unlike them, Sun Guards were officially Top 3 Knightage, specialized in attacking force as a group.

"By the numbers, I can tell every single member of Sunguard is deployed," said Doran, with misery on his face.

"Now I can see why Silver Moon wasn't chasing us. By interrogating Rotem, they figured out where we were heading. It was not us who got out of their chase. It was them who intended to surround us," said Devron, nervously.

They tried their best to move as fast as possible, but the enemy was faster. Silver Moons must have contacted Sun Guards by magic, when they met the party near Hu'gerock.

The people drew a deep sigh without knowing. Crossing the river in this situation was almost impossible.

"What if we go around, down to the river?"

It was Briella, who hasn't been talking much.

"We could. But if we go down the river, the river gets wider, and are surrounded by cliffs that are too high to climb. Grass field will show up if we go down further, but that's the territory of Demonland, which is known as a land of demonic monsters. If we were to go around the river, we better go up, but that's not a route we can take. Not from here," Doran explained in great detail.

He knew this place very well. As if he found Haroon's appreciative gaze an embarrassment, he whispered in a low voice.

"This place is near where I grew up."

And that explained why Doran and his kids were acting more energetic as they got closer to Paros.

“Let’s stop by here for today, and think about how we should cross the river.”

On Devron’s words, the party looked for a place where they could rest.

Chapter 11

Unexpected class advancement

The party thought and thought, but could not come up with any good ideas.

“We are running out of food, and we’ve got enemies on our back...” Said Doran, drawing a deep sigh.

That’s exactly the kind of situation the party was in. Haroon was concerned about the three kids most of all. Why do kids have to suffer from being chased because of adults’ matters?

‘Well, Except Briella,’ Haroon thought.

She was the one in the middle of everything. He didn’t know the details, but he was able to deduce a few facts out from what happened in the past few days.

‘She must be a person with the potential to change the whole situation of the Empire. That’s probably why she became a main character of the story quest, and the story will change depending on her arrival to Paros.’

While the others were giving each other their opinions, Haroon was lost in many kinds of thoughts.

‘Devron and Doran must be knights, or vassals of Briella, Hall is a bodyguard, and Teeno is...’

He wasn’t sure about who Teeno was. He must have gained those abilities from experience when wandering around, so he couldn’t relate him with Briella. From the way he acts, Haroon was pretty sure that Teeno has been a slave or servant of someone, but that didn’t sum up as Teeno wouldn’t be that good at pathfinding if he was one.

“So Boss, any ideas?”

It was Philip.

“Nope,” Haroon replied.

The party were hoping for one from him, as they were able to cross the poisonous wetland because of him.

“What worries me is that they might get in proper position before we actually attempt to cross the river,” said Doran.

So the party looked down the mountain, and they could see how the Sun Guards were placing their troops, blocking every way to the bridge.

Thinking rationally, it wasn't Haroon or his members' concern. Devron's request was just to escort them to the Viscounty of Paros, not to risk their lives to be involved in political war. To be fair, they did tremendous work by protecting them from the monsters.

‘But it is not like I have no relation with them, as I'm now part of them as well,’ he thought.

The party was devoured by anxiety, seeing the sun going high up. If they hesitate any longer, not only will they not have any chance to go across the river, but they would get attacked from every direction instead.

“Only if there is something to draw their attention away,” Doran said.

“Yeah. It'll be even better when that happens in the darkness, so we can sneakily swim across the river,” Philip added.

Listening to that conversation made a slight change in Devron's expression that nobody noticed. Devron thought deeply, and talked with Doran in private. Then, he came to Haroon, who was sitting a bit away from the party.

“What are you intending to do as living when you survive out of this? Are you still going to be a mercenary?”

It was a sudden question, but Haroon calmly answered.

“I’m not quite sure myself. My goal is to be strong. I’ll have to do my best, looking for ways to be stronger, until I can be satisfied about myself.”

From Turan, or from Rotem Mercenaries, he had learned lots of things about being a mercenary. Everything was a pure coincidence. By meeting Elser, he got to become something that no users but only NPCs would. Moreover, moving as a mercenary was the way he chose to help himself to get a class, and he had no intention of being one.

He wanted to play with other users, like Jinsoo, when he got a class. Playing the game with other NPCs without meeting any other user made him feel like he became one of them. Of course, that wasn’t something he hated, but he always thought he needed to be with other players as he is a player.

Moreover, as his physical body was getting stronger too, it was now time for him to take care of his real self. He needed to buy food supplies for his capsule, which costed buckloads of money, and he wanted to go see his step-father’s tomb, who made Haroon experience all these valuable memories. He also needed to repay the Outers’ kindnesses, whom helped his step-father create the capsule.

“I can show you one way to be strong. Think of it as a reward I give you for your work so far.”

“What do you mean?”

“Just follow me.”

Devron gave a nod to Doran, and started walking down the mountain.



They went to a wide place that was far from the group. Without any explanation, Devron showed Haroon a way to walk, run, and a swordsmanship.

“What is the meaning of these?”

“These are the skills I am going to teach you. The people who know these skills are you and me, the only two in this world. I’ll show you the way and flow of the swordsmanship once again. For now, rather than practicing it, try to memorize every move. You have to focus especially on the breathing, and how to connect moves

organically.”

Devron started explaining the move by details. Haroon wasn’t sure why he would teach him skills suddenly, but he concentrated on his explanation without questioning.

“This swordsmanship is called Messenger Swordsmanship. There are numerous knights who reached the high-end of Experts, so it can be considered as an advanced swordsmanship. This was the secret of Shadow Messenger Knights, who used to be the strongest, and who were members of a secret knightage of the royal family.”

Devron explained, being impressed upon seeing how Haroon concentrates with deep, clear eyes.

‘Is he even thinking of risking his life, or something?’ Haroon thought.

Haroon suspected Devron was planning to risk his life to draw the enemy’s’ attention away to earn time for the party to go across the river. His face seemed determined, more than he’d ever seen. Haroon had lots of questions to ask, but he couldn’t when he saw Devron’s strong expression.

“Try to copy the move, as far as you can remember. I’ll correct the wrong moves.”

“Alright.”

With a short answer, he showed three sword dances that had 42 different changes in moves, before he forgot the rest. He didn’t even dare to waste time by asking mere questions, or saying ‘thank you’, as he knew Devron was taking this quite seriously.

Devron smiled, seeing Haroon remembering the moves better than he thought, and started correcting the length of breathing, and the way to connect the moves, demonstrating each, and every move.

It took five times of explanation and demonstration for Haroon to perfectly memorize the moves of feet, arms and breathing. He wasn’t actually able to perform the swordsmanship, but he did memorize every single explanation.

While Devron was taking a break for a moment, Haroon was able to hear the UI sound that he was eager to hear.

[You've converted to a Swordsman! Every stats has increased by 1 point.]

Haroon was able to get a class, as he had enough Soul Points, and an NPC willingly taught him skills. But no time was given for him to be happy about it, nor to check the change in his stats, as Devron continued teaching.

"More than a swordsmanship, you've got to learn this skill. You will need it today. This skill is not simply about properly walking or running. This skill was born with the union of high-dimensional theory and breathing."

Haroon was going to ask something, but didn't bother to, and focused on Devron's voice. It was a difficult skill where one needed to give full attention on their feet.

Devron explained twice while demonstrating, and it helped Haroon to learn the principle of the skill, and how exquisitely it formed. Devron seemed satisfied as Haroon seemed like he was understanding the theoretical part of it.

"The skill that I just taught you allows you to build up mana just by walking. If you devote yourself to this skill, it'll bring enormous potential to your development."

"Thank you so much!"

Haroon was really happy. An NPC had just taught him skills that were simply too much for him.

They were simply amazing, how just walking and running can build up mana.

"Well then, practice yourself until sunset. You have learned the moves already, so practicing for half of the day should be enough for you to develop."

"I will."

Devron went back to the group, leaving Haroon alone. Haroon wasn't sure why Devron suddenly would teach him skills, but also, there was no reason for Haroon to not learn the skills. This was the opportunity Devron gave him to be stronger.

Haroon forgot that he just got a class, and focused on the Messenger Skills that Devron just taught.

Leaving the running skill behind, which required more complicated theory and detailed moves, he started practicing walking, focusing on movement of his feet to sync with his breathing.

Although it seemed like mere walking, putting just the right amount of strength in each part of his feet wasn't an easy task. The ground within a 20 step diameter started getting messy from Haroon's feet.

'Absorb mana from the ground, and use it to organically move each part of your feet!'

That was the key point of the theory of the skills Devron just taught.

Repeatedly reciting that, Haroon focused on toes, sole and the heel, and imagined the breath going down to each part of the feet. He slowly lost himself in his concentration. His amazing concentration was happening once again.

About two hours later, he suddenly heard the UI sound.

[Focus is increased by 1 point]

[Agility is increased by 1 point]

[Wisdom is increased by 1 point]

[You have learned a new skill! – Messenger Walking]

Messenger Walking (Passive)

You have learned the Walking skill, which was the secret of Messenger Knights, the legendary knightage that doesn't exist anymore. Messenger walking is not just walking. It is the skill that took over a thousand years to create, and the trials and errors of many swordsmen. Learning Messenger Walking allows the accumulation of mana within one's body. This was the secret to how the Messenger Knightage of the Royal family could have been the strongest knights in history.

Haroon clenched his fists. It was a skill that he could use to build up mana. It would take some time, but he eventually would not have to suffer from lack of mana when summoning Brat, never again. Moreover, he just gained 3 stat points when learning the skill. It brought back memories in Mercenary Academy. He just learned a skill that he really liked.

He wiped sweat from his face with a cloth, and went back to practicing. He wasn't feeling tired even after he just walked for 2 hours. He actually was feeling more energetic than before. His practice lasted until Devron came to call him.



The sun was setting. Devron was shocked upon seeing Haroon.

'Was it... Really after high noon that I taught him the skill?'

Haroon's progress was way faster than he thought. It was a very slight move, but Devron could see the grass moving, pointing at the sole of Haroon's feet.

'He is absorbing mana from grass, although it is a very small amount.'

He could have never imagined that Haroon would learn the skill and principle behind it, this fast. It was the hardest part to learn when he was learning the skills.

He remembered the days back in his training. He didn't believe that absorbing mana through feet was a possible thing, and it was just a mere description of the skill. It took 10 months for him to actually be able to do that. Before that, he never knew one could breath through their skin.

For some reason, he decided to teach Haroon, who was the strongest one in the party if he'd exclude himself, hoping for it to be a little bit of help for tonight. But he never thought Haroon would learn the skill this fast.

One could easily walk faster just by moving their feet organically, and that was the only thing that he expected from Haroon. But Haroon has already entered the world of Messenger Walking.

'He is gifted. I've never seen anyone like him...' He thought.

He shook his head.

He couldn't imagine the limit of Haroon. Just like peeling an onion, there was always a new aspect of him when he thought he had found a limit. It made him feel embarrassed about how he talked about Haroon to Sepher, back when Haroon had lost his

consciousness.

‘Finding a path in the poison is already a mysterious ability, and he has a throwing knife skill that no one ever heard of. A man with the ability to react quickly in a rapidly changing situation, strong leadership, and making quick judgements. And those he showed so far, are getting better and better, and now he is showing this kind of concentration?’

He wasn’t able to wake Haroon up from his deep concentration. As a person who has learned the same skill, he felt sorry about disturbing Haroon.

‘He’s a really talented one that I want to teach! Only if it wasn’t about the Royal family...’ he thought, drawing a deep sigh.

It took quite some time for him to call Haroon, still feeling guilty about it.



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